Today's
The Herald-Palladium
included inside

Dowagiac softball wins district title
Page B1

Stay Safe
Be mindful of your surroundings, especially in unfamiliar or dimly lit areas. Trust your instincts - if something feels off, move to a safer location if possible. Encourage neighbors to establish a neighborhood watch program to keep our communities safe.

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Dowagiac News

Established 1897 • Serving Dowagiac, Sister Lakes and Cassopolis | JUNE 6, 2026 | leaderpub.com • A publication of The Herald-Palladium | $4

Dowagiac District Library to host Summer Reading Kickoff

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

The Dowagiac District Library is inviting the community to have a "roaring" good time next week at its Summer Reading Kickoff Party.

The event will take place from 10:30 to 3 p.m. Monday at 211 Commercial St. The theme of this year's program is "Unearth A Story."

The fun kicks off for children with Adopt-A-Dino, where children will embark on a quest around the library property to "adopt" their dinosaur from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Guests can register for summer reading during this time. Woodstock & Grill will be on site to serve up hot dogs and sandwiches from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

From 1 to 2 p.m., The Potawatomi Zoo will have animals at the library for its Zoo-to-You program, which allows children to enjoy an up close encounter with live zoo animals with the zoo staff. Last but not least is the Color Fight scheduled from 3 to 3:30 p.m. Participants use washable colored powders to color each other by spraying them at each other. It is recommended that participants wear older clothes for this event.

"This is our first really big year that we're going all out. Usually we do traditional

See **READING**, page A4

Photos courtesy of Joseph Westrate

Students, friends and family gathered inside the gymnasium at Ross Beatty High School Thursday for the school's 147th commencement ceremony. **See more photos on page A5.**

Cassopolis graduates Class of 2026

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

CASSOPOLIS — Smiles and sunshine beamed on the faces of students as they filed out of their high school as official graduates.

Students, friends and family gathered inside the gymnasium at Ross Beatty High School Thursday for the school's 147th commencement ceremony. One by one, the 60 graduates of the Cassopolis High School Class of 2026 received their diplomas and were formally

See **GRADUATES**, page A4

Dowagiac Connected to host 13th annual Fireworks Show

By PMG STAFF

DOWAGIAC — Dowagiac Connected has announced the return of the Dowagiac Fireworks Show on Friday, June 26 at Russom Park and surrounding viewing areas, marking the organization's 13th annual Fireworks Show while celebrating America's 250th birthday.

The evening will feature family-friendly activities, food vendors, and one of the largest shows in the event's history, made possible through the generosity of local businesses, organizations, and individual donors.

Food trucks and vendors will begin serving at 7 p.m. at Russom Park. Attendees will be able to enjoy a variety of food and treats from Ben's Pretzels, Taqueria Don Chepe, Simply Rolled Ice Cream, Kona Ice, Popcity Popcorn, Firemen's Pizza, Elephant Ears, Mr. B's BBQ, and the Soccer Concession Stand.

Families will also enjoy a large inflatable bounce house sponsored by Surf Internet, located near the playground area.

"We are excited to continue investing in Dowagiac Connected and supporting the community we serve," said

See **FIREWORKS**, page A4

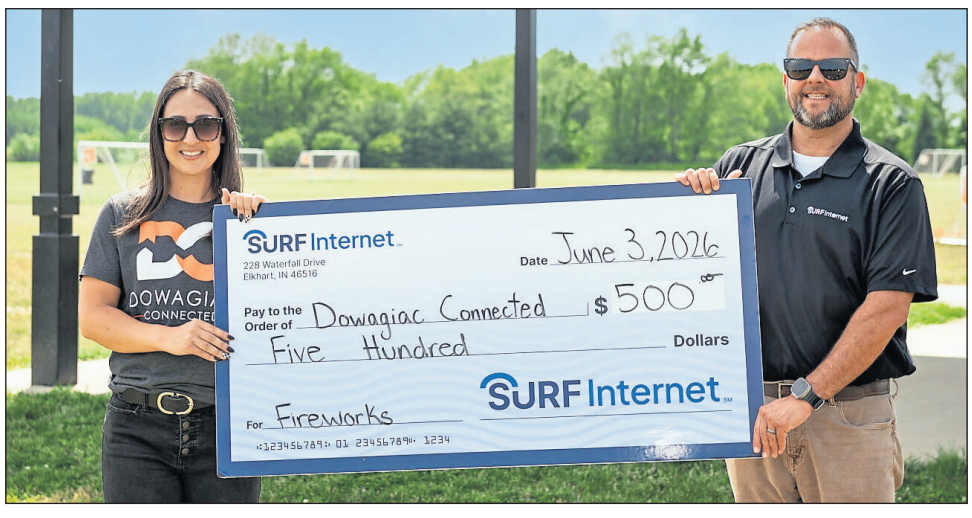

Photo courtesy of Blue Print Photography

Jordan Holzwart of Surf Internet presenting Jessica Shank of Dowagiac Connected with Surf Internet's donation toward the 2026 Dowagiac Fireworks Show at Russom Field in Dowagiac.

DOWAGIAC MIDDLE SCHOOL HONOR ROLL

DOWAGIAC – Dowagiac Middle School recently released its honor roll for its third marking period.

Students who achieved a 4.0 GPA are noted with an "+". High Honors are students that achieved a 3.4 to 4.0 GPA. Honors are students who achieved a 3.0 to 3.39 GPA.

Sixth grade

High honors

Barnes, Camille+; Cortez, Uriel+; DiStefano, David+; DiStefano, Leonardo+; Franklin, Stella+; Grabemeyer, Olivia+; Hackett, Hailey+; Hatchew, Shail'ah+; Hemenway, Sophia+; Medrano, Natalie+; Mendoza, Samantha+; Mohr, Jordyn+; Rohdy, Jackson+; Rudlaff, Elisabeth+; Sandberg, Liam+; Siegel, Brennan+; Slates, Jacob+; Sweet, Skylynn+; Walker, Danica+; Winters, Ariana+; Alsup, Jackson; Ausra, Tate; Bennett, Za'Kyrah; Blanco, Reyna; Bridges, Hayden; Carpenter, Paisley; Engen, Alaric; Farver, Payten; Franklin, Aiden; Gantt, Cash; Gillesby, Ava; Grady-Garcia, Olivia; Hall, Abel; Hammond, Ella; Keene, Jackson; Keller, Brody; Kiggins, Wyatt; Lindzy, Taylor; Lock, Zane; Marshall, Nolan; Martin, Rhylee; McQueary, Broley; Mendoza, Cristian; Mihm, Emily; Mireles, Luka; Mitchell, Loki; Nawrocki, Harlow; Ojeda, Pedro; Pavia-Morales, Uriel; Phillips, Penelope; Poole, Adonis; Race, Bronson; Rankin, Zuri; Runyon, Jayla; Salinas, Hailie; Samuel, Aiden; Shaer, Emma; Staley, Isabel; Trowbridge, Cristina; Weiser, Marshal; Winchester, IshpemingMko; Zavaleta Cruz, Alexis; Zuhl, Owin

Honors

Anderson, Payton; Baez, Norah ; Caldwell, Lyla-May; Carrillo, Jayden; Contreras, Rogelio; Covell, Graice; Gallegos, Sylis; Grady, Somia; Hatfield, Arianna; Irvin, Adonis; Johnson, Easton; Jones, Heavenly; Kenreich, Gabriel; Lindzy, Skylar; Manzano-Lorenzo, Adan; Martinez-Murray, Eladio; Nickens, La'Jerionn; Reeves, Taliyah; Ridenour, Travis; Shelton, Zariel; Simpson, Sterling; Slabaugh, Elizabeth; Suasto, Evan; Sullivan, Arianna; Toy, Luke; Trejo-Prudencio, Melani; Vandenburg, Emma; Vincent, Ja'Vayah

Seventh grade

High honors

Killarney, Owen+; Leighton, Stella+; Orvis, Robert+; Price, Mckenzie+; Spivey, Jocelyn+; Steenbeke, Madeline+; Washington, London+; Adams-Tinch, Lacey; Benson, Kane; Bressler, Chase; Brito, Natalie; Chapman, Taylor; Cooper, Rowan; Crandall, Abigaill; Dutoi, Matalyn; Justice, Emery; Keene, Clayton; Laylin, Kenley; Lozada, Landon; Lynch, Madison; Mroczek, Brielle; Nearpass, Nolan; Phillips, Payton; Poorman, Nyree; Roach, Sophia; Sanders, Landon; Schau, Kellen; Snay, Journey; Tucker, Channing; Vazquez, Layla; Watson, Madison; Woodruff, Olivia

Honors

Beard, Peyton; Bennett, Nevin; Brog, Madeline;

See **HONOR ROLL**, page A6

6 54708 08550 2

Today's obituaries – Page A3-A4
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Ardena Jean Enders
Stacie Lynn Hershberger-Hebron
Marty Liggett
Betty Ruth Ruiz
Geneva Ruth Green
Linda Eileen Villwock
Carl Eugene Parker
Mark Richard Rayburn
Barb Kietzer

Inside today's Herald-Palladium

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FRANKLY

Tips and quips

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip or a quip? Call Frankly at 269-687-7700 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com.

■ Congratulations to the Niles High School and Cassopolis graduates. Can't wait to see all the amazing things you do.

■ Congrats to Sarah Scoggin as Interim Prosecuting Attorney.

■ How many data center owners live near their data center?

■ Hats off to Niles and Brandywine baseball teams on outstanding seasons. You made Niles proud.

■ Beach Bash was a blast Friday night. Love seeing downtown come to life.

■ Another school year in the books. Thank you teachers and staff for all that you do.

■ Kudos to the courts for a verdict of the Trump name to be removed from the Kennedy Center.

■ If you want change in your community, get involved.

■ Southwest Michigan is a baseball and softball hotbed. So many schools have rich traditions and it is great to see local teams get statewide recognition.

WEATHER

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 85.

Sunday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 64.

Monday: A 50 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms after 2 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 84.

Monday Night: A 50 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 65.

Tuesday: A chance of showers and thunderstorms, then showers likely and possibly a thunderstorm after 2 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 84. Chance of precipitation is 70 percent.

Thousands attend annual Bluegrass Festival

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — The sounds of guitars and fiddles filled the air around the amphitheater at Riverfront Park last weekend for the annual Niles Bluegrass Festival. Organized by the Riverfront Optimist Club, the festival featured several popular bluegrass and Americana acts as well as food and beverage vendors.

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Local theater programs earn WAVE Performing Arts Awards

By PMG STAFF

BENTON HARBOR — Three local high schools took home hardware in the fifth annual WAVE Awards for Excellence in High School Musical Theatre at the Mendel Center Mainstage on the Benton Harbor Campus, 2755 E. Napier Ave. Wednesday, May 20.

Edwardsburg's "Mamma Mia!" earned a WAVE Award for Outstanding Set Design in a Musical (Kyle Rehnlund, Andrew Hamilton, & Emma Hurley), Dowagiac's "Frozen, Jr." for Outstanding Light Design (Lincoln Clark) and Brandywine's "Beetlejuice" won the Featured "Special" Award for "The Sandstorm."

Edwardsburg was nominated for 10 awards, Dowagiac eight and Brandywine four. Loosely designed after Broadway's famed Tony Awards, the WAVE Awards is meant to recognize, encourage and promote excellence in high school musical theatre. This annual event also offers students and production staff a valuable educational opportunity through written feedback from highly qualified arts professionals, additional performance opportunities, scholarship opportunities, a sense of belonging and value in the local arts community, and public recognition for a job well done.

The participating schools were evaluated by 10 adjudicators, and about 890 students participated in the musicals that were reviewed.

"When we launched the WAVE Awards five years ago, we dreamed of creating something that would unite and elevate high school musical theatre across our community, and the growth we've seen over these years is proof that dream has taken hold," said Kristopher Zook, LMC Dean of Arts & Sciences and founder of the WAVE Awards. "With more participating schools than ever before, the energy and talent on display each year is extraordinary. This event has become a true celebration of what young artists can achieve."

All nominees received an LMC Red Hawk Scholarship good for a three-credit course taken within the next four academic years and written feedback from a panel of arts professionals. The lead actor recipients also received $1,000 Sierra Loughrin Scholarships to participate in LMC Visual & Performing Arts coursework at LMC.

Wednesday's event began with red-carpet arrivals, followed by the awards ceremony, which included several musical production numbers. Students from all participating high schools and Lake Michigan College opened the night with a combined performance of I Hope I Get It from A Chorus Line, choreographed by Kelsey Trux. Concord HS performed Bring My Baby (Brother) Home from Freaky Friday, Edwardsburg HS performed Honey, Honey from Mamma Mia!, James Whitcomb Riley HS preformed the title song from The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, Lakeshore HS performed One Normal Night from The Addams Family Musical, Paw Paw HS performed Go, Go, Go, Joseph from Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Penn HS performed All I've Ever Known/ Way Down Hadestown from Hadestown: Teen Edition, and South Haven HS performed Feel It Like Everyone from The Olympians: An Epic Muse-ical.

Presenters included:

■ LMC President Dr. Ken Flowers

■ PBS/WNIT President Amanda Miller-Kelley

■ Education & Community Engagement Coordinator for the Wharton Center at MSU & Leader of the Sutton Foster Awards Ben English

■ LMC Dean of Student Life & Engagement Melissa Grau, LMC Visual Art Faculty and international author/curator

■ Susan Wilczak, Notre Dame Voice Faculty and international opera singer

■ Deborah Mayer, United Way of Southwest Michigan Campaign Relationship Coordinator Dawn Howley

■ Midwest Family of Southwest MI's longtime host of Moody in the Morning radio show and Publisher Emeritus of Moody on the Market Pat Moody

■ Co-Founder and Conductor of the Southshore Concert Band Dale Reuss, Sasha Farber (Dancing With the Stars)

■ Janel Parrish (Pretty Little Liars & Hallmark Channel Movies)

■ Ciara Renée (Broadway's Frozen, Pippin, and Waitress as well as DC's Legends of Tomorrow, The Flash and Arrow TV series)

■ Paige Davis (TLC's Trading Spaces and Broadway's Chicago and Beauty & the Beast)

■ Patrick Page (Broadway's Hadestown)

■ Kathy Najimy (Sister Act and Hocus Pocus movies, King of the Hill).

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OBITUARIES

Barb Kietzer

Barb, named Barbara Karen, was born on January 7, 1940, in Coloma, Michigan, to the late Carl and Alleyne (Waldorf) Kietzer of Watervliet.

She attended Watervliet Public Schools graduating in 1958. Barb furthered her education at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, graduating in 1962 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Education. She also completed graduate work at WMU and MSU in addition to attending the Ray Vogue Dress Design School in 1972 and graduating from National School of Dress Design in 1973.

Barb began her teaching career in 1962 at Niles Senior High School and taught there until her retirement in 1994. During her tenure at Niles, she sponsored Future Teacher's Club, Sophomore Class, Student Council, Mark "School Spirit" Program, SADD and the yearbook "Tattler." She organized an organ donation program to create more awareness about organ donation and was Business Department Head the last several years of her teaching career.

For 13 years she also organized a Christmas cookie exchange for the staff. After retirement, she worked for several years at The Flower Cart in the shop as well as delivering flowers.

She was a life member of the Michigan Education Association, a member of the National Education Association, as well as the Niles District Education Association, serving as secretary of Region V for two years.

Barb spent countless hours volunteering her time for the animals and organizations that meant so much to her – Pets Alive from 1988 until 1998; Humane Society of SW Michigan-1998 until present; Heartland Wildlife Rehab Center from 1999 until 2001; Cass County Animal Control-2000 until present; Animal Service League from 2006 until 2015; Poplar Spring Animal Sanctuary from 2004 until present. In 2006, as a special fundraiser, Barb had a cookbook published which was very successful in raising funds for the shelters. She was also on the planning committee for the Ed Lowe Catsopolis Festival for five years being in charge of food vendors and arts & craft ... 1998-2002. "The animals of the earth are among God's special creatures; they help us to work, carry us, guard our homes, and best of all, they bring us joy and laughter. " St. Francis of Assisi

In addition to her volunteer work, Barb enjoyed travels to Europe, the Middle East and 49 of the 50 United States. She also enjoyed gardening, feeding the birds and squirrels, crafts, cooking and baking. She baked many cookies and sold them around town to raise donations for animal shelters and was fondly called the "Cookie Lady." As a special treat for her cat friends she raised catnip in her gardens and made catnip toys for them. She also baked homemade dog bones for her dog friends.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Carl Kietzer on May 22, 1988 and Alleyne (Waldorf) Kietzer on May 30, 1998; her sister, Wanda Danneffel Jones on June 8, 2013; and by her cats, Buddy, Sam, Buster, Kitty, Friskie, Sylvester, Patches, Fluffy and Violet.

Barb is survived by her nieces, Robin (Eugene) Kaley and Heidi Joslyn; nephew, Jay Danneffel; great nephews, Nick and Matt Kaley, Mikel Joslyn, and Brandon Danneffel; great nieces, Ashley Joslyn and Courtney Danneffel; and by her cats Daisy and Cleo.

A time of visitation will be held on Monday, June 8, 2026 at Brown Funeral Home from 5pm until 7pm. Funeral service will be Tuesday, June 9, 2026 at 11am at Brown Funeral Home with Dave Schiele officiating.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in Barb's name to the following animal shelters: Cass County Animal Control, P.O. Box 132, Cassopolis, MI 49031, Humane Society of SW Michigan, 5400 Niles Road, St. Joseph, MI 49085, Poplar Spring Animal Sanctuary, 5200 Mt. Nebo Road, Poolesville, MD 20837. Or to honor her memory, you may also feed a stray cat until a home can be found ... feed all the birds and squirrels and other wildlife who come to your home ... as Barb loved to feed all critters ... remember, we are all God's creatures ...

Condolences, photos, and memories may be left for the family at www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home, Niles.

Geneva Ruth Green

June 14, 1944 – May 5, 2026

Geneva Ruth Green, 81, passed away on Tuesday, May 5, 2026, in Holland, Michigan.

Geneva was born on June 14, 1944, in Little Rock, Arkansas to the late Osie Price and Emma (Dicie) Price. Along with her parents, Geneva was preceded in death by her husband, James Edward Green. Left to cherish the memory of Geneva is her son, Phillip (Lawanda) Bailey; grandchildren, Marc Bailey, Jessica Jackson, and Naomie DeJonge, and six great grandchildren.

Geneva was a hardworking and caring woman who believed in carrying her own weight and doing what she could for others. She worked at Wonderland Supermarket in Niles before finding a calling in home health care, where she spent her time caring for those in need. After suffering an injury that no longer allowed her to work, she retired and later met Phillip McCauley. Together they welcomed her only son, Phillip Bailey, who was one of the greatest joys of her life.

On January 24, 1981, Geneva married the love of her life, James Edward Green. The two shared many years together filled with love and devotion until his passing on March 15, 2026. Geneva loved him deeply and cherished the life they built together. Geneva enjoyed talking with people and never met a stranger. She loved family gatherings and treasured every moment spent with those she loved. In her free time, she enjoyed arts and crafts, drawing, writing short stories, and collecting photographs. She proudly kept many photo albums filled with memories of family and friends. She was also devoted to caring for her mother and always made sure her family had what they needed.

One of the happiest moments in Geneva's life was learning she would become a great-grandmother. Her family meant everything to her, and she took pride in being there for each generation. Above all, Geneva was a woman of strong faith who believed deeply in God. She was a faithful member of Bethel Apostolic Tabernacle and found comfort and strength in her church family and her relationship with the Lord. Geneva will be remembered for her kind heart, her strong spirit, her faith, and the love she gave so freely to those around her.

Visitation for Geneva will be on Tuesday, May 26, 2026, from 10:00am to 11:00am with a Funeral Service to be held at 11:00am at Brown Funeral Home, 521 East Main St. Niles, Michigan 49120. Burial will immediately follow at Mission Hills Memorial Gardens, 61453 M-51, Niles, Michigan 49120. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home.

Marty Liggett

March 4, 1940 – February 6, 2026

Marty Wayne Liggett, 85, of Niles, died peacefully Friday, February 6, 2026.

His life began March 4, 1940 in South Bend, Indiana the child of Cecil and Marjorie Liggett. He married Diane Fougerousse March 12, 1960 in the First Presbyterian Church in Niles.

Marty's claim to fame was that he lost to Milt Pappas one to nothing despite throwing a no hitter. Milt Pappas went on to play major league ball. He loved to dance and he and Diane won a dance-a-thon in 1959. He was known for his jitterbug. He played fast pitch softball for several years. Marty went on to compete in triathlons from the age of 50 to 75. He placed in every race he competed in. He was a 1958 graduate of Niles High School where he was a thespian and received nine varsity letters for his athletic ability. Marty enjoyed the Chicago Cubs and Blackhawks but was an avid Bears fanatic. He had a deep love of chocolate, movies, and '50s rock n roll. He was ahead of his time: he raised strong, independent women that could do anything they put their minds to. He cherished his wife and daughters, but they also knew that he loved and supported them no matter what. He was a big part of his community and was active in the Parks and Recreation Department. He was an instrumental part of bringing the River Valley Trail that runs from Niles to South Bend to fruition.

Marty will be greatly missed by family and friends. He is survived by his daughters, Kelly Maxwell of Niles, Marci Katzenberger of South Bend, Indiana; four grandchildren, Kateasha Crespo of Niles, Dillon Wayne Crespo of Niles, Cali Katzenberger of South Bend, Indiana, Wyatt Katzenberger of South Bend; six great grandchildren, Dakota Wayne Crespo, Abbyrose Crespo, Aubriana Holmes, Annabelle Crespo Ainsley Hoilmes, Denny Wayne Crespo; son-in-law, David Crespo, Sr. of Niles; and a few nieces, nephews, and cousins.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his beloved wife; daughter, Tracy Crespo; son-in-law, Wayne Maxwell; and grandson, David Crespo, Jr.

Family and friends will gather to celebrate Marty's life, Friday, June 12, 2026 from 6:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. in FOP Park, 531 North State Street, Niles, Michigan.

Marty will be laid to rest with his beloved wife Mission Hills Memorial Gardens.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com.

Betty Ruth Rutz

July 23, 1922 – May 25, 2026

Betty Ruth Rutz, 103, of Bellevue, Nebraska, formerly of Vandalia, Michigan, died Monday, May 25, 2026.

Her life began July 23, 1922, in Benton Harbor, Michigan, one of two children born to Edward and Margaret Blankner. She married Arthur Maynard Rutz September 13, 1942, in Benton Harbor, Michigan. After sixty-nine years of marriage, he preceded her in death June 28, 2012.

Betty will be greatly missed by family and friends.

She is survived by her daughter, Ruth (Paul) Rath of Omaha, Nebraska; grandchildren, Sandra (Jason) Setzer of Knoxville, Tennessee, Ivette (Chuck) Margraves of Ooltewah, Tennessee, Michael (Carol) Rutz of Kalamazoo, Mario Rutz of Knoxville, Tennessee; great grandchildren, Ryan (Rochelle) Rutz, Grace Rutz, Ian Setzer, Avery Setzer, Christina Margraves, Charlie Margraves; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

In addition to her beloved husband, she was also preceded in death by her parents and her son, Roger Rutz.

Family and friends will gather Friday, June 12, 2026, from 10:00 am until time of service at

12:00 noon in Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, 202 North Broadway Street, Cassopolis.

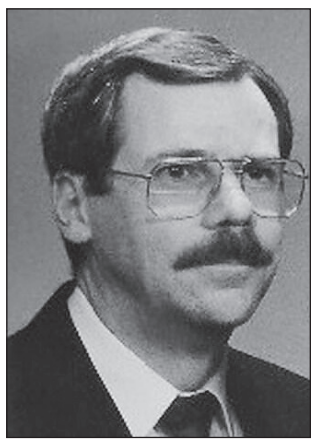
Betty will be laid to rest beside her husband in North Shore Memory Gardens, Coloma.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Betty be made to the Cass County Council on Aging, Post Office Box 5, Cassopolis, Michigan 49031-0005.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

Carl Eugene Parker

September 3, 1944 – May 24, 2026



Carl Eugene Parker, 81, of Niles, died peacefully Sunday May 24, 2026.

His life began September 3, 1944 in McMinnville Tennessee, the eldest of four children born to Carl and Lois Parker. Carl married Juanita Carpenter on October 19, 1963 in Niles.

Carl worked as a data processing manager for over thirty years and at Meijer for more than ten years where he eventually retired from. He was a hard worker and proud of his positions.

Carl will be greatly missed by family and friends. He is survived by wife of sixty-two years, Juanita Parker of Niles; one granddaughter, Lacie (Eric) Miller of Longmont, Colorado; two great grandsons, Landon and Noah Parker; one great granddaughter, Emma Nichols; twin brothers, Jeffery Parker of Nashville, Tennessee, and Jerald (Lynne) Parker of Edwardsburg;

He was preceded in death by his parents, parents in-law; only son, Keith Parker; and his brother, Jim (Carolyn) Parker.

Friends and family will gather on Monday June 1, 2026 in Mission Hills Memorial Gardens, 61453 M-51 Niles, Michigan 49120 for a graveside service at 11:00 a.m.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com.

Death notices

Cindra L. Mikel, 84, of Cassopolis, died June 1, 2026, at Cassopolis. Wagner Family Funerals, Cassopolis

Ardena Jean Enders

June 21, 1944 – May 26, 2026

Ardena Jean Enders, age 81, formerly of Granger, IN passed away on Tuesday, May 26, 2026, surrounded by her family.

She was born on June 21, 1944, in Howard City, to Ira & Wilma Cole. Ardena married Michigan State Trooper Steven B. DeVries on August 27, 1966, he preceded her in death on October 12, 1972. Ardena later married David Enders on March 30, 1974.

She enjoyed being involved in her church, being with family, tending her flower gardens, walking in her woods, traveling, camping, and sewing. Ardena was a member of Redeemer Church, Niles Michigan.

She is survived by her children: Dan Enders (Joy Milliser-Jacquez) Elkhart, IN, Robin Gerard (Bryan) Nashville, TN, Steve DeVries (Danielle) Granger, IN, and Lance DeVries (Michelle) Hastings, MI; 14 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; sister, Edna Rhodes Howard City, MI.

Ardena was preceded in death by her parents: Ira Cole and Wilma Cole; husbands: Steven B. DeVries and David Enders; brothers: Leo Bennett and Gene Cole; and sister, Mary Whitney (Bennett).

Visitation will be held from 1:00pm until 2:00pm on Saturday, June 6, 2026, at Ofield Funeral Home, 4500 Kalamazoo Ave SE Kentwood, MI 49508. A funeral service will be held at 2:00pm. Burial will be at Chapel Hill Memorial Cemetery.

Memorial contributions may be made to: The Hundred Club of Detroit PO Box 1018 Fenton, MI 48430 ph: 810-208-8922.

Stacie Lynn Hershberger-Hebron

January 1, 1989 – May 27, 2026

Stacie Lynn Hebron, 37, of Vandalia, Michigan, passed away Wednesday, May 27, 2026 as the result of a tragic farming accident.

Her life began January 1, 1989 in Kalamazoo, Michigan born to Shana Leeper and Stewart Hershberger. She married Gideon Hebron September 10, 2016 in Vandalia, Michigan.

Stacie graduated in 2007 from Three Rivers High School. She served honorably in the U.S. Army as an ammo specialist. Stacie loved being on the farm, it was her safe place where she found peace and comfort to raise her children. Her generous heart and kindness she brought to everyday moments will be dearly missed by all who knew her.

Stacie will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by her husband, Gideon Ross Hebron; two children, Grace Lynn Hebron and Colton Lee Hebron; her mother, Shana (Shannon Hampsten) Leeper; father, Stewart (Cathy) Hershberger; two sisters, Kaylie (Envin) Billings, JoAnna (Chad) Kelly; grandmothers, Sally Smith and Peggy Duff; mother-in-law, Annette Hebron; sister-in-law, Olivia (Zach) Belin; two nephews, Ethan Jones, Beau Kelly; niece, baby girl Belin; great-niece, Juniper Jones and many aunts, uncles, cousins, extended family and friends that were like family. She was preceded in death by her son Caleb Alan; brother Tyler Hershberger; father-in-law, Richard Hebron; grandfather, Bill Leeper; grandparents, Dottie and Maynard Hershberger.

The family will observe a private remembrance and plan to celebrate her life on a date and at a time to be announced.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Stacie be made to Gideon Hebron, for Gracie and Colton.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

Linda Eileen Villwock

February 27, 1944 – June 2, 2026

Linda Eileen Villwock, 82, of Dowagiac, died peacefully at her home surrounded by family on Tuesday June 2, 2026.

Her life began February 27, 1944 in Edinburgh Indiana. She married Thomas W. Villwock at St. John's United Church of Christ, Niles on August 28, 1965. Linda graduated in 1962 from Niles High-School, she then went on to Ferris State University studying dental hygiene. Thomas and Linda worked together on the farm where she particularly liked feeding the calves. She loved gardening, watching the birds and traveling. Trips to Mackinac Island were her favorite.

Linda will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by her husband Thomas; one daughter, Melinda E. (Allen Reynolds) Villwock; one son, Timothy W. (Amber) Villwock; two grandsons, Calvin (Breanna) Villwock, Tyler (Lexy) Villwock; one granddaughter, Kara Villwock; three great-grandsons, Theo, Hoyt, Henry; brother-in-law, Don (Lisa) Villwock; sister-in-law, Grace Angotti, one nephew and several nieces. She was preceded in death by her parents Harold and Thelma Asmus.

Family and friends will gather in Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, 615 East Main Street, Monday, June 8, 2026 from 10:00 a.m. until the time of her service at 12:00 noon. Linda will be laid to rest in Mission Hills Memorial Gardens.

The family prefers contributions in Linda's name be made to Pokagon Volunteer Fire Department, 31555 Pokagon Highway, Niles, Michigan 49120

Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com.

See more obituaries on page A4

OBITUARIES

Mark Richard Rayburn

May 3, 1962 – May 26, 2026

With heavy hearts, we announce the passing of Mark Richard Rayburn on May 26, 2026 at home. Mark was born and raised in Niles, MI. He later followed his dream and relocated to Lake Placid FL. in 2025.

He is survived by his beloved wife Sharon Rayburn (Dunifin) whom he married on May 24, 2000. He is also survived by his brother Scott Rayburn, niece Rachel Wicinski (Rayburn) step children, Carl Ewert, Mandy (Bart) Cheney, and his grandchildren Tyler Cheney, Riley Ewert, Clarissa Ewert and Benjamin Ewert. He was preceded in death by his parents Homer "Richard" Rayburn and Helen Rayburn.

Mark was an avid fisherman and he loved to share his passion with his friends and family. He hosted many fishing trips and fish frys. Memories of these events will live in the hearts of everyone that loved him. Mark will be remembered for his strength through adversity, his love for his wife and his family, and the friendships he maintained for many years, some dating back to his childhood. He will be missed by many. A memorial to take place in his hometown will be planned for a later date.

Obituary policy

Leader Publications publishes death notices at a cost of $25, or free with obituary purchase. Extended obituaries are priced based on word count.

If there's an error because of a mistake made by the newspaper, the obituary will be reprinted at no charge.

For more information, or to submit an obituary, email obits@leaderpub.com.

CASA of Cass County to host annual dinner fundraiser

By PMG STAFF

CASS COUNTY — Court Appointed Special Advocates of Cass County is inviting community members to come together for an evening of fun, food and purpose at its annual Dinner and Fundraiser Thursday, June 18 at Southwestern Michigan College.

The event will feature a taco bar provided by El Amigo Pepe, trivia hosted by DJ Jor-El, a silent auction, and opportunities to learn more about CASA's work advocating for children in Cass County who have experienced abuse or neglect.

CASA of Cass County recruits, trains and supports volunteer advocates who serve as a voice for children involved in the child welfare system. The volunteers work alongside judges, attorneys, and social service professionals to help ensure children's best interests are represented and that they have the opportunity to find safe, permanent homes.

Funds raised during the event will help CASA of Cass County recruit, train, and support volunteer advocates, allowing the organization to serve more children throughout the county.

In addition to raising funds, CASA hopes the event will increase awareness about the organization's mission and inspire community members to learn more about becoming advocates, volunteers, or supporters.

The Annual Dinner and Fundraiser will take place on June 18 and is open to the public. Individuals, families, businesses, and community organizations are encouraged to attend.

Tickets and additional event information are available at cass-county-casa-inc.square.site/. For more information about CASA of Cass County, volunteer opportunities, or the June 18 event, contact Erica Boulanger at (269)-228-5258 or email info@casscocasa.org.

227 SMC students named to honor rolls

DOWAGIAC — Southwestern Michigan College named 55 students to the President's List for the Spring 2026 semester.

Students honored on the President's List must earn a perfect 4.0 grade-point average (GPA) on a 4.0 scale while carrying a full study load of at least 12 credits. The 162 students making the Dean's List achieved at least a 3.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale while carrying a full study load.

Local honor roll students include:

President's List

Berrien Springs
Karlie Phillips, Elena Atencio, Hindramalai Pawa

Buchanan
Kody Pena

Cassopolis
Brayden Rice, Luke Findlay, Marissa Imperio

Dowagiac
Nevaeh Hemminger, Frances Getz, Anthony Hyatt, Petra Torres, Michael Burks

Eau Claire
Marta DeLos Santos-Neponuceno

Edwardsburg
Hayden Hiemstra, Olivia Bachmann, Brailey Fowler, Erin Porter, Malakai McGee

Galien
Silas Dobson, Youhana Alshahhaf

Niles
Leah Martin, Travis Danelski, Jenna McGann, Kaleb McCombs, Liz Van DePutte, India Caulder, Tereza Varner, Grace Layman

Vandalia
Ariel Smith, Caleb Bontrager, Miranda Cropsey

Dean's List

Berrien Center
Zach Bennett, Ryleigh Hunsberger

Berrien Springs
Zach Bittner, Rebekah Griffiths, Ava Isaacson-McLean, Seiji Jacobson, Karl Krause, Maria Rodriguez, Adrian Sirbu, Audrey Wolf

Buchanan
Bodie Bryans, Kati Ferrell, Jimmy Powers, Samuel Stellmach, Siara Stoddard, Julian Swistek, Addy Wetzel, Madeline Young, Katie Zebell

Cassopolis
Gavin Anderson, Kasie Blad, Ian Crail, Megan Franks, Kirsten Franks, Devyn Garcia, Annie Johnson, Sam Swick, Savannah Watson, Austin West

Dowagiac
Merrill Adams, Andrew Bryant, Jewel Burgess-Stambaugh, Nayeli Casillas, Collin Cozadd, Patricia Hardy, Hunter Hurley, Sammy Linn, Kaity Ownby, Thomas Pierce, Drew Rank, Owen Saylor, Carson Shugars, Jonathan Silva, Adam West, Niyana Woods

Edwardsburg
Teerah Ayodo, Daniel Brooks, Titus Devlin, Mariah Dickens-Mantey, Carter Houseworth, Anika Lambdin-Kron, John Luebcke, Kaylee Seabolt, Zach Shears, Justina Stinnett, Mara VanBuren

Niles
Sophia Bachman, Bode Bosch, Selena Brown, Rene Collis, Tysen Custard, Grace Double, Aiden Fawcett, Kenneth Flournoy, Michael Hammond, Sophia Hojara, Cameron Horvath, Tanner Lenox, Thorin Palmer, Cody Reese, Seth Smith, Shy Spoor, Izzy Tibbles, Laila Vance, Mikylah Wallace, Jordan Wieferich, Isabella Wier, Andrew Wozniak

Vandalia
Brody Knepple, Olga Suarez

READING

From page A1

reading logs and we'll have some programs, but this year we decided to go all out," said Adult Services Coordinator Erin Amundson. "Our children's librarian is a 36-plus-year science teacher, so she's really bringing a lot to the table for programs. We have almost 50 programs for kids, teens and adults over the summer."

The summer reading program will run from June 8 to July 31 with a variety of events scheduled for toddlers up to adults:

Children's programs Kids programs including Messy Mondays and STEM programs.

All ages events including family craft night and Marvel-Comics artist Jerry DeCaire, who will host a three-hour drawing performance and workshop.

For teens, the monthly Recipe Rock Stars and then teen centered craft events.

Adult programs include speakers from the Cass County Historical Society, the Pokagon Band of Southwest Michigan, and the third annual Murder Mystery Party at Sister Lakes Brewing.

"That's one thing we wanted to stand out was summer reading isn't just for kids," Amundson said. "We really are also focusing on making sure that the teens have special stuff just for them. And then for the adults, we played into the 'unearth a story' theme. We're having a genealogy person come in and they're going to speak about how to unearth your story. In July, we're going to have the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi coming in to do a program to unearth the area around you. They're going to talk about Cass County and how the Pokagon Band plays a part. We will have our murder mystery party, which is for adults at the end of July. We also have another adult program that features art to unearth your inner artist."

Amundson, who has been with the library for seven years, is looking forward to bringing the community together for summer reading.

"It is just about bringing the communities together and seeing new faces that maybe we don't see at our normal programs," she said. "It's about getting people interested in the library and this gives them that opportunity."

FIREWORKS

From page A1

Jordan Holzwart of Surf Internet. "As a local company, we believe being involved goes beyond providing internet service. It means building relationships, supporting local events, and staying connected to the residents and businesses that make this community special. We look forward to being a long-term partner in Dowagiac's growth and success."

Dowagiac Connected is a nonprofit organization made up of citizens and friends of Dowagiac who are passionate about strengthening community connections. Through events, volunteerism, scholarships, fundraising efforts, and community improvement projects, the organization works to enhance the quality of life throughout the Dowagiac area while fostering a sense of community pride and engagement.

Dowagiac Connected Fireworks Committee Chairperson Jessica Shank said the organization is excited to continue a tradition that has become a popular event of the summer season.

"Hosting the 13th Annual Dowagiac Fireworks Show is especially meaningful as we celebrate America's 250th birthday," said Shank. "What began as a community effort more than a decade ago has grown into one of Dowagiac's favorite summer traditions. We are incredibly grateful for the support of our sponsors, donors, and volunteers. We appreciate the generosity of supporters like Surf Internet and the many individuals and businesses who make this event possible. Their generosity allows us to continue enhancing the show each year and creating an experience families can enjoy together."

The fireworks display will begin at dusk, providing a spectacular finale to an evening of food, fun, and community celebration.

Dowagiac Connected is a volunteer-driven nonprofit dedicated to strengthening community connections through events, scholarships, volunteer projects, and initiatives that enhance quality of life throughout the Dowagiac area.

Admission to the event is free thanks to the generous support of sponsors and donors. Dowagiac Connected would like to recognize the contributions of Surf Internet, C. Wimberly, D. MottL Realty Group – Matt and Ale Money, Jim D's Body Shop, Imperial Furniture, Rank Trucking & Repair, and Dr. David and Sarah Mathews, along with many other businesses and individuals whose generosity helps make this community tradition possible.

Community members who would like to support future fireworks shows and other Dowagiac Connected initiatives will have multiple opportunities to contribute. Cash and Venmo donations will be accepted at Russom Field on the day of the event. Donations can also be made online by visiting the Tickets & Donations tab at DowagiacConnected.com.

For additional information, to make a donation, or to learn more about Dowagiac Connected, visit DowagiacConnected.com.

GRADUATES

From page A1

recognized as high school graduates by district administration and the school board.

"To our graduating seniors: you have shown resilience, determination, and spirit," said Principal Lindsay Gorham-Pflug. "Through challenges and triumphs, you've grown not only as students but as individuals ready to face the world. We are proud of who you've become and who you are yet to be. Tonight is a celebration of learning, growth, and endless possibilities. Let's honor the achievements of the Class of 2026 and look forward with hope and pride to all that lies ahead."

The event featured a flower ceremony, an alumni speech from Class of 2004 graduate Cona Marshall and speeches from top graduates.

Salutatorian Kenyen Xayasane-Kennedy was the first to address those in attendance.

"Cassopolis is where many of us have spent some of the most important years of our lives," Xayasane-Kennedy said. "This school, this community, and the people here have helped shape who we are. Cassopolis is more than just the place we went to school. For many of us, it is a place that taught us lessons, gave us friendships, helped us grow, and became part of who we are. When I look back on our years here, what stands out most is not one memory, but the feeling of it all. It was the early mornings, the long days, the school spirit, the laughs with friends, the stressful moments when something needed to get done but we still waited until the last minute, and the moments when graduation felt so far away that it barely seemed real.

"And now, here we are."

Xayasane-Kennedy hopes the Class of 2026 will take the memories made at Cassopolis with them wherever they go.

"What makes tonight special is not just one memory or one event. It is everything it took for us to get here," Xayasane-Kennedy said. "Every challenge we pushed through, every lesson we learned, and every step that brought us closer to this moment. It is also about the people who stood beside us: our families, our teachers, our friends, and our classmates. Each of us has our own story. Some of us are heading to college. Some are going straight into work, training, or other opportunities. Some know exactly what comes next, and some are still figuring it out. But no matter where life takes us, we will always share this chapter.

"As we leave this place, I hope we carry more than just memories. I hope we carry the work ethic we built, the lessons we learned, and the friendships that shaped who we are."

Valedictorian Mikayla Myrthil was the next speaker unwavering support and community-like environment.

"When I walk down the hallways, there is a sense of unity that can't be shaken off," Myrthil said. "People are ready to help one another at a given notice- this is especially true for teachers as well. We are surrounded by the kind of people who are happy to give up time and energy for those in need- and go above and beyond in the process, too. This speaks for our school's character, which openly values resilience, responsibility, and respect."

Myrthil praised her classmates for supporting each other throughout high school and reminisced about school activities that helped the class fortify its bond.

"School activities have given us skills that not only help us connect as a class but also build us up for success," Myrthil said. "It helps us learn how to work with one another, what our own talents and affinities are, and how to effectively execute what we want. And as we cultivated such skills in our school activities and classes, let us now use what we learned and bring it out into the world."

Myrthil closed the speech by encouraging classmates to never give up on their goals.

"As we make our way towards the next chapter of our lives, I want you all to remember all the hard times faced in the past; they make us who we are today. Each time we experience something, we can also learn and grow from it as well- and before you know it, we have already grown into capable men and women, ready to take on what lies ahead. So wherever you are going, whether it may be college, trade school, military, the workforce, or perhaps undecided; know that you have the skills to make it.

"Know that they have been in the making since the beginning of freshman year, and know that they will continue to grow, changing and refining the more you live life."

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CASSOPOLIS GRADUATES CLASS OF 2026

Photos courtesy of Joseph Westrate

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Funeral director joins MFDA leadership

By PMG STAFF

LANSING — James Meyer, CFSP, of Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services in Niles was recently elected Secretary and Treasurer of the Michigan Funeral Directors Association.

The MFDA is a professional organization representing roughly 1,100 funeral directors serving 465 funeral homes statewide and over three-quarters of all mortuary science licensees in Michigan.

MEYER

"Jim brings decades of experience, deep professional knowledge and a strong commitment to service to MFDA's leadership team," said Phil Douma, executive director of the MFDA. "Throughout his career, he has remained deeply engaged in the profession and committed to supporting both his colleagues and the families they serve. That kind of steady, service-minded leadership will be a tremendous asset to MFDA."

Meyer's career in funeral service began in 1975, when he started working at a local funeral home in Kansas while attending music school. He later graduated from the Kansas City Kansas Community College Department of Mortuary Science and earned licensure as both a funeral director and embalmer. Meyer moved to Michigan in 1986 to work with Halbritter Funeral Home in Niles. Now with Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Meyer has spent his career working in local, family-owned funeral homes.

Meyer has been an active member of district, state and national funeral director associations throughout his career. He previously served on the MFDA Board of Directors representing District No. 3 in Southwest Michigan and has remained closely involved with the association through district meetings, annual conventions and quarterly working group meetings with MFDA, Gift of Life and Eversight. He also serves on the Michigan Mortuary Response Team Command Staff and was deployed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to his MFDA involvement, Meyer is a member of the Academy of Professional Funeral Service Practice and the British Institute of Embalmers, where he serves on the board of the North American Division. He is also an auxiliary member of the Society of Professional Obituary Writers. Meyer and his wife, Jeanne, live in Niles, where he has served for more than 30 years on the worship team and in leadership at Community Evangelical Free Church.

Founded in 1880, the Michigan Funeral Directors Association is the nation's oldest organization of funeral professionals. The MFDA board of directors guides the work of the association in its mission to enhance the value of funeral service and the profession through government advocacy, public information, and professional education.

On Base Productions wins the Telly Award

By PMG STAFF

NILES — On Base Productions was awarded a Gold Telly Award at the 47th annual Telly Awards for its video, "Discover Buchanan Community Schools," created in partnership with Buchanan Community Schools.

The Telly Awards, established in 1979, are among the most respected honors in video and television production, recognizing excellence across all screens and receiving more than 13,000 entries from around the world each year. Winners are selected by a judging council of more than 250 industry leaders representing organizations such as Netflix, HBO, Meta Creative Shop, IMAX, Adobe, and the BBC.

The Gold Telly represents a significant milestone for On Base Productions. While the company has earned recognition from the Telly Awards for five consecutive years, this marks the first time the company has received the organization's highest honor.

The award-winning Discover Buchanan Community Schools video was designed to showcase the district's students, staff, programs, and culture while helping attract new families and celebrate the strengths of the Buchanan community.

"We are incredibly grateful to Charles and On Base Productions for their dedication to the 'Discover Buchanan Community Schools' video project," said Superintendent Patricia Robinson. "Charles's exceptional professionalism, collaborative spirit, and creative vision allowed us to showcase the very best of our schools, students, and staff. He has delivered a powerful tool to help us promote our district, and we couldn't be happier with the final result. Congratulations, Charles, on this outstanding achievement."

For Charles Nelson, founder of On Base Productions, the recognition reflects the power of authentic storytelling and strong community partnerships.

"Winning a Gold Telly Award is an incredible honor, but what makes this award especially meaningful is the partnership behind it," Nelson said. "Buchanan Community Schools opened their doors and trusted us to tell their story. This project was about highlighting the people, opportunities, and sense of belonging that make Buchanan special. We're proud to have helped share that story and grateful to see it recognized on an international stage."

This year's Telly Awards theme, 'Capture the Original,' celebrated creative work that tells unique stories in bold and innovative ways. Winners included major brands, media organizations, nonprofits, educational institutions, and independent production companies from around the world.

The full list of winners for the 47th Annual Telly Awards is available at the Telly Awards website. The winning Discover Buchanan Community Schools entry can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z9YjyKvxD_Q&t=1s.

Photo provided

Charles and Jessica Nelson of On Base Productions.

Oregon woman injured in two-vehicle crash in Jefferson Township

JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP — An Oregon woman was injured in a two-vehicle crash in Jefferson Township Saturday, according to the Cass County Sheriff's Office.

At approximately 8:48 p.m., deputies responded to a two-vehicle crash at the intersection of Dailey Road and Pine Lake Street in Jefferson Township.

The investigation showed that a vehicle driven 22-year-old Mazzi Katzen, of Lake Oswego, Oregon, was eastbound on Pine Lake Road when she failed to yield to oncoming traffic, hitting a vehicle southbound on Dailey driven by 33-year-old Jesus Beltra Rico, of Goshen, Indiana. Speed may have been a factor for the southbound vehicle.

Katzen was transported by SMCAS EMS to Elkhart General Hospital. Assisting agencies on scene were OTEPD, SMCAS EMS, Edwardsburg Fire Department.

The crash remains under investigation.

HONOR ROLL

From page A1

Brown, Alivia; Chapman, Sadie; Dodd, Rogan; Hatchew, Mason; Higdon, Taylor; Hoenes, Colton; Mack, Khariell; Marquez, Jose; Olmedo, Oliver; Pompey, Graciana; Siegl, Lillian; Sisk, Alexander; Veloz, Mario; Wilson, Calleigh

Eighth grade

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Honors

Boling, Ashton; Copley, Alaya; Craft, Jacob; Earley, Don'Trell; Freeman-Christopher, Dalton; Grant, Cecily; Herrera, Alejandro; Johnson, Jordan; Lopez, Joel; Marshall, Aryanna; Miller, Mckenzie; O'Konski, Hunter; Phillips, Lanie; Planck, Izzy; Sanchez, Orlando; Schaus, McKenzie; Turner, Erin; White, Carson; Wilson, Janiyah

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Sports

Edwardsburg falls to Three Rivers in semis
Page B5

Got results?
max.harden@leaderpub.com

Niles falls to Vicksburg 2-1 in regional semifinal

Don Campbell / HP staff

Niles' Brenden Olsen avoids the tag from Vicksburg's Korbin Dugan and scores.

By MAXWELL HARDEN
Paxton Media Group

STEVENSVILLE — The Niles and Vicksburg baseball teams split their regular-season matchups, so it was only right that the Division 2 regional semifinal at Lakeshore High School was the rubber match.

The Wolverine Conference foes faced off in a wire-to-wire battle that ended with a 2-1 Vikings loss on the final play of the game. With the game tied 1-1 at one in the bottom of the eighth, Maddox Rosalin singled off Jaxson Racht to score the game-winning Mitch Beyer run.

"We competed. We competed with great plays defensively," said Niles Coach Jim Brawley. "Offensively, we just didn't get the good hit. The [Grahan Kubiak] is good, we know they're good. They have a very good pitching staff, a really, really solid pitching staff. The kid threw the ball great for them. We had our opportunities and we just couldn't get the big hit when we needed to."

The game was scoreless through five innings as Racht and Vicksburg pitcher Grahan Kubiak refused to give up an inch. The Vikings struck first when a Bryce Zache single scored a Brenden Olsen run to give the Vikings a 1-0 lead in the sixth. Olsen, who was walked before stealing second base, was able to beat the ball home to score the run.

See **NILES**, page B1

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

The Dowagiac softball team celebrates with the Division 2 district championship trophy Saturday at Niles High School.

Dowagiac blanks Three Rivers for first district title since '06

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — Dowagiac has waited a long time to celebrate a district softball championship. But the wait is over.

The Chieftains beat Sturgis 15-0 in the Division 2 district semifinal and Three Rivers 5-0 in the final to earn the district championship, the team's first since 2006.

"I don't know if I have the words for it. We've been at it for a while," said Dowagiac Head Coach Mike Behnke. "These girls have been playing hard since they've been seven years old and they put a lot of time in softball, travel ball, high school ball; you name it and they've done it. They're just kind of reaping their rewards right now, but it's been a long time coming.

"I was there the last time years ago. It's just a great feeling and a great feeling for them."

See **DOWAGIAC**, page B1

Buchanan rallies past Bobcats to win sixth straight district

PMG STAFF

Red Arrow Raiders center fielder Laney Strother thwarts a home run ball during the May 30 district semifinal game against Buchanan.

THREE OAKS — The Buchanan softball team got past Brandywine and the Red Arrow Raiders to claim its sixth straight Division 3 district championship on Saturday.

The Bucks topped the Bobcats 7-4 in the final after a 12-2 five-inning triumph against the Raiders.

The games were played at River Valley High School.

Trailing 3-0, Brandywine pulled into a 3-3 tie in the bottom of the third thanks to an error and Macy Pellow's double before taking a 4-3 lead in the fourth as Addison Anglin singled in a run.

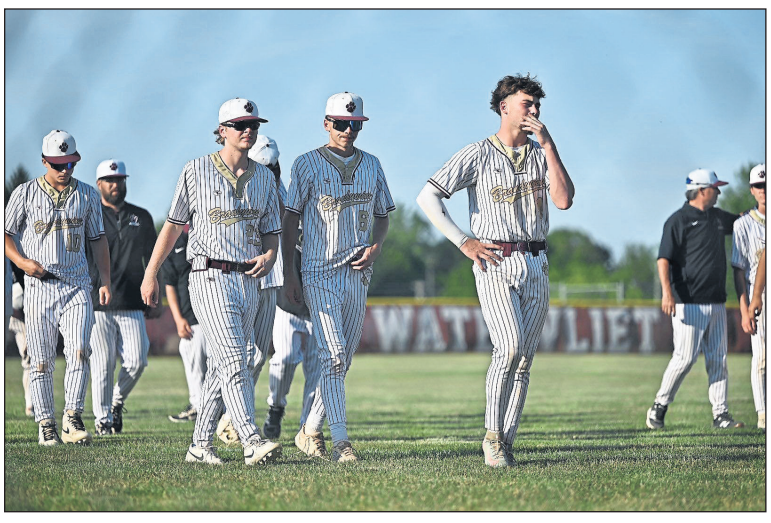
But Buchanan's Tala Carlin, Khloe Singleton and Terynn Heller all singled in runs in the top of the fifth inning to put their team on top for good.

"Keeping the streak of six straight district titles alive means a lot to all of us," said Buchanan Coach Rachel Carlson. "For the team, it's a source of pride and a reminder that every practice, every off-season workout matters. For me as coach, it's confirmation that our focus on fundamentals, preparation, and accountability is paying off. That said, we don't take past success for granted. This streak fuels our commitment to continue improving: showing up early, putting in the extra reps, supporting one another, and holding ourselves to a high standard both on and off the field.

"Our goal is to build a culture where hard work and teamwork are the expectations, not the exception."

Winning pitcher Haylee Legault allowed 10 hits and four runs (just one of them earned) while triking out two and walking one.

See **BUCHANAN**, page B1



Photos courtesy of Tanya Hagen

Brandywine fell to Schoolcraft in a Division 3 regional semifinal on Wednsday in Watervliet.

Schoolcraft bats end Brandywine's season

By SCOTT HASSINGER
Leader Correspondent

WATERVLIET — The Brandywine baseball team picked an inopportune time Wednesday for a letdown on the diamond.

Schoolcraft took advantage of five Brandywine errors to overcome a three-run deficit and record an eventual 13-3 mercy-rule Division 3 regional semifinal win in six innings at Watervliet.

Schoolcraft (17-11) advances to face Pewamo-Westphalia (20-15) in Saturday's 12:30 regional championship at Kalamazoo Central. Shelby meets Kalamazoo Christian in another regional final at 10 a.m. in the same location. The two regional winners hang around and square off at 3 p.m. in a state quarterfinal matchup.

"We talk about baseball in the state of Michigan coming down to one game. You have bad games, but you hope those are in April and not in June. This wasn't something I saw coming, but we just shot ourselves in the foot a great deal today. We played very solid baseball all year and hadn't had a game like this one. I love all our guys and to see them put there heart into it and watch it unravel like it did is heartbreaking. I know they were trying their hardest, we just had some things that didn't work out today," said Brandywine head coach David Sidenbender.

For a half inning Brandywine (30-6-1) looked like the team that dominated the Lakeland Conference all Spring and captured the school's first district crown in 18 years.

But baseball is a funny game and things can change drastically and they did for Brandywine after the opening inning.

Brandywine scored all three of its runs in the top of the first.

See **BRANDYWINE**, page B1

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Buchanan's Cora Weinberg (right) heads for the home-plate welcoming committee after hitting a home run during the May 30 district semifinal game with the Red Arrow Raiders.

BUCHANAN

From page B2

Carlin went 3-for-3 with a triple as the Bucks racked up 11 hits (Heller also had three base hits).

Buchanan 12, Red Arrow 2

Three Buck players cleared the fence – Cora Weinberg, Kate Holloway and Terrynn Heller – in the district semifinal win.

Buchanan scored eight first-inning runs, with a series of run-scoring walks and a three-run triple by Aspen Berry triple aiding their cause.

Audrey Villaire was the winning pitcher.

Johnna Rochefort, Emerson Collins, Ella Lijewski, Brianna Taylor, Carlee Tanksley, and Addison Lynch each collected one hit for Red Arrow Raiders. Laney Strother and Rochefort each drove in one run for Red Arrow Raiders.

Brandywine bested Cassopolis 14-5 in the other semifinal.

DOWAGIAC

From page B2

A wild Three Rivers pitch in the first inning resulted in Marlie Carpenter and Charlie Reed scoring one Dowagiac run apiece to put the Chieftains up 2-0. At the top of the fourth inning, Charleigh Reed found her way home thanks to a Bree Campbell sacrifice fly to give the Chieftains a 3-0 lead.

At the top of the fifth inning, a Reed single scored Lillian Cobb and a Bree Behnke double scored Reed to round out the scoring. The Wildcats had an opportunity to tie or take the lead with bases loaded at the bottom of the fourth inning before Campbell struck out two batters to end the inning. The Chieftains did not commit an error in the game.

"Three Rivers, we knew they're a great team," Behnke said. "We knew we're gonna have to play well. Assistant coach Brian Henry told the girls we're gonna get the breaks when it matters meeting at district – and we did – but we also made our own breaks that way. We ran the bases well, we played defense, made every play and our pitcher pitched well. She only had one walk and a hit batter. I mean, we did everything right: timely hitting, clutch hitting, two-out hitting, getting on base. We did it all today."

Reed tallied three hits, three runs scored and an RBI while Bree Behnke had a double and an RBI while Marlie Carpenter and Lillian Cobb each had a hit. with Carpenter and Reed both showing aggressive base-running to record stolen bases.

In the circle, Campbell tossed a complete-game seven inning shutout with 12 strikeouts while allowing just two hits and two walks.

Three Rivers pitcher Giavanna Newburry took the loss, striking out five batters and giving up five runs on six hits. London Hoffmaster and Autumn Schroeder each had one hit.

For Dowagiac, the district title win is an endeavor decades in the making and one the Chieftains were determined to accomplish after falling short against Edwardsburg last season in the district final.

"It means the world. I know it means the world of the three seniors but we had this goal since that loss last year at districts," Behnke said. "We were gonna come back and we said from the beginning of this year, 'why not us?' Why can't we do what other teams have done? We worked hard, and it's been a tough season. We were tested with injuries, losing close games and just anything that could go wrong, went wrong. And we overcame all of that and came out champions today."

All the more special for Behnke was being able to spend at least one more week coaching his daughter, Bree Behnke.

"It's special, especially since it's my last year, it's her last year and it is something very special going out on top like that as District Champions."

The icing on the cake for Behnke was Hall of Fame Dowagiac football coach Bernard Thomas presenting him with the district championship trophy. Behnke played for Thomas as a student and was one of the standouts on the 1990 state title team.

"I don't think people would realize how special that is to me," he said. "He was my coach when we won the state championship. I talked to him earlier this week, and he said, 'get me on the pass list and I'll be there.' [Athletic Director Brent Nate] got him on the pass list. He said if we won he'd have a surprise for me and there was nothing better than seeing Coach Thomas walking that trophy out on the field. That was something I'll never forget."

The Chieftains aim to keep the dream season alive next week when they face Vicksburg at 10 a.m. Saturday in the Division 2 regional semifinal.

"We're gonna have a good week of practice for sure this week, and we're gonna have to play like we played today," he said. "We're gonna have to play very good softball. I don't know what's happening in the other districts, but the top three teams in the state are in each one of those districts, so it is not going to be easy. But we can beat anybody on any given day, that's for sure."

BRANDYWINE

From page B2

Kaeden Warfield led off the game for the Bobcats with a triple. Emerson Googley and Ryder Richard both walked to load the bases. Warfield scored on Hudson Aalfs' fielder's choice. Richard came home on a wild pitch and Googley scored on a sacrifice-fly by Kyler Marshall.

Schoolcraft scored six runs in the bottom of the second to grab a 6-3 lead.

Winn Evans blasted a two-run single to score Schoolcraft teammates Cody Priest and Bishop Hotrum. Zach Graber had an RBI single that plated JD Perrin. Evans, Graber and Kodee Bienz all scored on a three-run triple by Ty Goddard.

Schoolcraft tacked on its next two runs in the bottom of the third. Priest scored on a throwing error and Goddard came home on a wild pitch, extending the Eagles' lead to 8-3.

The Eagles added three runs in the fourth to boost its advantage to 11-3. Jacob Taylor scored on an error for Schoolcraft, while teammates Jack DeVries and Priest both scored on a wild pitch.

Schoolcraft scored the decisive two runs to win on the 10-run mercy rule in the bottom of the sixth. Hotrum scored on an error and Graber's RBI single scored Hotrum.

Goddard picked up the win on the mound for Schoolcraft allowing three hits, two walks with five strikeouts.

Aalfs started and was charged with the loss for Brandywine. Aalfs allowed four hits, two walks and struck out two. He got relief help from Richard and Parker Anglin.

"I thought our pitchers did well. We just didn't have command on the mound like we usually do and couldn't find the strike zone. Schoolcraft hit the ball well and found the holes. We threw the ball around a little today which isn't typical of us. Things just kind've snowballed from there. Schoolcraft just made some good plays that snuffed out any hopes we had of a rally," Sidenbender said.

The game was the final one for Brandywine seniors Richard, Warfield and Marshall.

'Those three guys were the heart of our team not only offensively and defensive, but by keeping the team up and positive. Richard leads by example. Kaeden is one of the most athletic kids I've ever had. Kyler is a very positive and athletic kid who really blossomed this year on the mound and at shortstop," Sidenbender said.

The Bobcats' long-time skipper stated there were several accomplishments on the diamond that made this season very special.

"Winning conference for a third straight year was a big goal these kids had, along with winning our first district title since 2008. We didn't lose a single game at home either out of probably 18 or 20. These kids competed hard and rattled off some big wins over Vicksburg, Edwardsburg, Lakeshore and South Bend St. Joseph. I just loved the way this group competed all season," Sidenbender said.

Schoolcraft continues to get better the further they get into the postseason under first-year head coach Dale Beeney, who is best known for winning state titles at New Buffalo and Bridgman.

"We started the game with some hiccups, but there's a lot of belief and grit with this ballclub. Our kids did a nice job pushing the ball to the right side. This is a good core group of kids who are really tight. All of them play different sports and they come together as a family in baseball," Beeney said.

NILES

From page B2

"We just put the ball in play and got a guy on," Brawley said. "Then, a hard ground ball and they tried to flip it to second, but our speed beat them there. And then Olsen on the bases, he scores from second on a ball that doesn't leave the infield; that's just heads-up baseball. He's looking at the third base coach, getting a wave sign with two outs, and just playing through the play. That's just playing through the play."

In the bottom of the seventh, Vicksburg's Braylin Vallier singled to center field on a full count, which brought Spencer Spicer home to tie the game at 1-1.

Maddox Rosalin tallied three hits for Vicksburg and Vallier had two hits. Kubiak struck out seven batters and gave up just two hits and one earned run. In his last game in a Vikings uniform, Racht struck out six batters and gave up eight hits and one earned run in 7.1 innings. Acie Kirtdoll and Bryce Zache each had one hit.

"We got to score more than one," Brawley said. "When you only score one, that puts a lot of pressure on your pitcher to be perfect. [Racht] was perfect for six, then they get a walk in the seventh, and it leads to a run. But he pitched great. That's a great hitting offensive team, and he pitched great against them. So, like I said, we just gotta score more than one."

While the loss was tough to swallow, Brawley was proud of the way his team competed this season and what they accomplished.

"They're just winners," he said. "They won three district championships, and they won two conference championships," Brawley said. "They broke the school record for wins this year. They're just winners, and they didn't play any cupcakes on the schedule. After Byron Center, we went to Jenison, we played [Middlebury Northridge and [Nappanee Northwood]. We played Vicksburg team three times and Lakeshore four times. We played a tough schedule, and they're just winners. That's what they do in everything—they won in football, they won in basketball. They're just winners."

He praised seniors including Kirtdoll, Racht and Olsen for what they have given to the program.

"Yeah, it's gonna be sad seeing them go but they're gonna go on to bigger and better things, too," Brawley continued. "Olsen's going to get drafted. Jaxson's gonna go pitch somewhere—Youngstown State, probably, that's where he's committed to. But Eastern also wants him now, too, because they had a coaching change."

As the book closes on the 2026 season, Brawley is optimistic about what the future holds for the program.

"We're gonna be fine," he said. "We talk about this, this is why it's always hard for me to retire," Brawley said. "You lose great players but nobody realizes that we really start five underclassmen – We start a freshman and four juniors. We got five guys coming back who are starters, plus we got our utility guy, Vinny Vance, who's going to be a great player for us, too. So we'll have talent. We'll be all right. It sucks right now, but we'll be all right."

Photos by Don Campbell / HP staff

Niles cheers as the Vikings face Vicksburg during Wednesday's regional semifinal in Stevensville.

Niles' Brenden Olsen celebrates with Brody Lace after scoring during Wednesday's regional semifinal against Vicksburg in Stevensville.

VICKSBURG 2, NILES 1

Niles	000	001	00	—	1	2 2
Vicksburg	000	000	11	—	2	8 1

WP – G. Kubiak 7k. LP – J. Racht 6k.
Top hitters – Niles: A. Kirtdoll 1b; B. Zache 1b, RBI. Vicksburg: M. Rosalin 3 1b, RBI; B. Vallier 2 1b, RBI; M. Bowles 1b; M. Beyer 1b; K. Dugan 1b.

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Julio Cortez / AP

Venezuela fans take photos of their beers before a Copa America quarterfinal soccer match between Venezuela and Canada on July 5, 2024, in Arlington, Texas.

Many soccer fans will be drinking alcohol and watching the World Cup

By DORANY PINEDA
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — It was early morning on a recent Saturday and The Greyhound Bar & Grill in Los Angeles was abuzz with soccer fans clapping, hooting and hollering. Their eyes were glued to the TV screens, tables littered with beer pints and pitchers and other boozy libations.

Paris Saint-Germain and Arsenal were facing off in the Champions League final, and by 9:20 a.m. – less than a half hour into the game – the patrons inside this crowded bar had already purchased $1,300 in alcohol.

"It's just a better vibe when you're a little buzzed," said Madeline Guillen, 28, who was drinking a mimosa with friends. "That's a big thing about sports. I think sports and drinking go hand-in-hand."

Drinking alcohol while watching sports is common in many countries, and millions of soccer fans will be doing so this summer during the FIFA World Cup games in Mexico, Canada and the United States. But imbibing boozy drinks during what could be a sizzling June and July has some experts worried. They say mixing alcohol with extreme heat poses extra risks, especially people drinking excessively who may not be hydrating enough, staying cool, or have underlying health conditions.

Here's what to know about the science of extreme heat and drinking alcohol, plus tips from experts if you're going to be drinking while watching soccer on a hot summer's day.

When summer, sports and booze collide

Climate change, caused by burning coal, oil and gas, is making heat deadlier worldwide, especially in the summer, and that's raising worries about soccer players and fans suffering heat stress during the games. Heat also influences how people drink alcohol and whether they end up in the hospital.

Various studies from around the world show that drinking alcohol peaks in the summer, and that people living in hotter climates are more likely to binge drink, according to a study from Mexico.

There is also sometimes a "hedonic effect" where people drink to ease the discomfort of feeling hot, said Nathan Morris, assistant professor in thermoregulation at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. "We drink alcohol, we feel good, and so it masks that normal drive to do something to cool yourself down," which can lead to heat stress.

"Maybe we stay out in the heat longer. Maybe we drink less cold water. Maybe we're less likely to use a fan or seek an air conditioned space," he added. "I think that might be where we're seeing more of the strain on the body."

International research has also established links between heavy drinking and sports spectators. One paper from Australia found that participants self-reported consuming an average of five drinks in just over two hours while watching Australian football games. In a 2023 study, researchers found that higher temperatures resulted in more alcohol-related hospital visits in New York state.

Heat and alcohol, a riskier mix

Heat exhaustion happens when your body loses too much water and salt from excessive sweating. When the body can no longer cool itself, heat stroke occurs, which can cause confusion, loss of consciousness and even death. Heat combined with humidity – the kind of weather in host cities like Miami, Houston and Monterrey, Mexico – makes it harder for sweat to evaporate to cool the body.

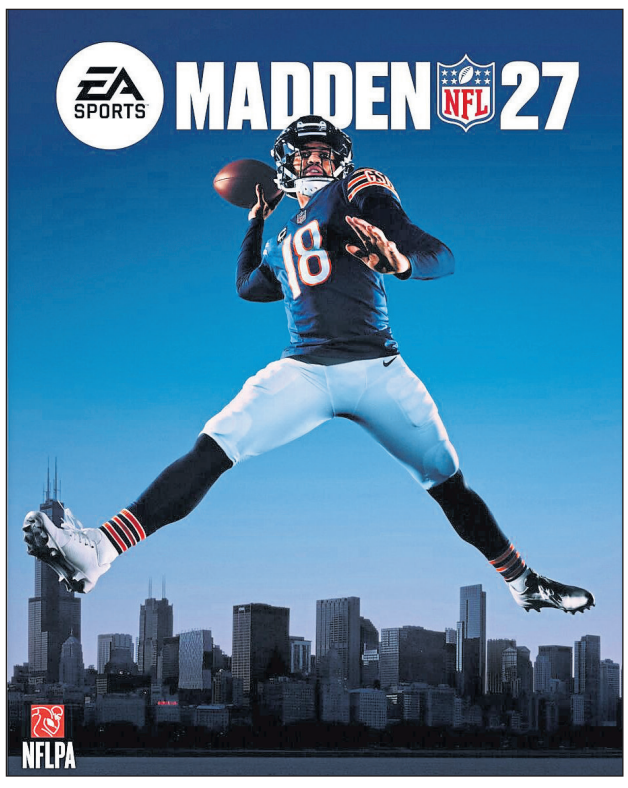
Alcohol primarily affects the central nervous system – your body's master processing center responsible for your thoughts, feelings and movements.

When you combine fluid loss from sweating on a hot day with increased urination from drinking alcohol, it can lead to dehydration, which can make you feel the effects of drinking faster, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Additionally, studies show drinking on a hot day makes it less likely you'll wear sunscreen, and that alcohol reduces the amount of heat exposure needed to get sunburnt.

"If you put together hot weather, summer, crowd, during the World Cup, people are sweating more, so they're losing liquids from their body," said Dr. Lorenzo Leggio, physician and scientist with the National Institutes of Health.

Bears' Williams strikes jump-throw pose for new Madden NFL 27 cover

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Uncredited / EA Sports

This image provided by EA Sport shows Chicago Bears quarterback Caleb Williams on the cover of the Madden NFL 27 video game.

Chicago Bears quarterback Caleb Williams was announced Tuesday as EA Sports' cover athlete for Madden NFL 27.

On the standard cover, Williams is depicted in a body position similar to his pivotal, scrambling, fourth-and-8 jump pass to Rome Odunze in a stirring comeback victory over Green Bay in a wild card playoff game on Jan. 10.

With his arm cocked to throw and his feet spread, Williams appears to soar above a silhouette of the Chicago skyline that is set against a blue backdrop.

The deluxe edition features a tight shot of Williams with arms crossed over his white game jersey, a dark, night-like background and snow falling around him.

Being featured on the game's cover is "like my childhood dream was coming true," Williams said. "I grew up playing Madden and imagining what it would be like to be part of the game."

Williams and the 2025 Bears became synonymous with late-game theatrics last season, staging more than a handful of comeback victories to go with some dramatic comeback bids that came up just short – including their season-ending playoff loss to the Los Angeles Rams.

In 17 regular-season games, Williams passed for a franchise-record 3,942 yards with 27 touchdowns and seven interceptions in his second season since being drafted first overall out of Southern California.

Coach: Sewell's move to blind side will be an easy move

By LARRY LAGE
Associated Press

Chris Szagola / AP

Detroit Lions tackle Penei Sewell plays during a game against the Philadelphia Eagles on Nov. 16, 2025.

ALLEN PARK — The Detroit Lions are asking perhaps their best player, offensive tackle Penei Sewell, to change positions this season and fully expect a seamless transition.

"It'll be like riding a bike for him," Lions coach Dan Campbell said Friday before the team's workout. "Will there be things he'll have to learn? Yeah, of course there will be. But I mean, he has played left. That's muscle memory. He played a lot of left in college and for us for those in '21."

Sewell is one of five players to have been an All-Pro three times and selected to the Pro Bowl four times during his first five seasons.

Anthony Munoz, Tony Boselli and Joe Thomas all did it over the last half-century at left tackle, and Jim Parker did so while playing three positions in the late 1950s and early 1960s, according to Sportradar.

Detroit is making the move to replace Taylor Decker while putting first-round pick Blake Miller or newly acquired veteran Larry Borom at Sewell's previous spot at right tackle.

"Sewell can do it all," Campbell said.

Detroit drafted Sewell out of Oregon, where he was an award-winning left tackle, with the No. 7 pick five years ago.

Sewell started the first eight games of his career in 2021 at left tackle because Decker was injured, making him the youngest left tackle to start an NFL game at 20 years old.

The Lions shifted him to right tackle midway through his rookie year and he stayed there for the last four-plus seasons, other than a short stint during the 2023 season when Decker was hurt again.

Decker asked for his release during the offseason, ending a 10-year run as the team's starting left tackle after announcing he was coming back instead of retiring. The Lions addressed the void by taking Miller out of Clemson with the No. 17 pick last month.

Sewell, who is in the first season of a four-year, $112 million contract, has proven to be quite a pick for Detroit.

He earned first-team, All-Pro honors the last three years and Pro Bowl recognition four straight times. Sewell has started 83 times in the regular season, plus four playoff games, in five years to help the long-suffering franchise become a respected team in the league.

"We expected great things from him from the beginning, and he's done nothing to disprove that," said Lions assistant general manager Ray Agnew, who has been a part of the NFL for nearly four decades. "I think he's one of the best that ever did it."

Campbell said the 6-foot-5, 335-pound Sewell is athletic enough to play guard or even tight end, but switching sides for an offensive lineman can be challenging.

Players who have made the move say it's like driving a car with the opposite foot or shaving with their other hand. The footwork is different as is the hand-and-eye coordination required on each side.

"When you switch, you have a different leg up front," Sewell has said. "So you have to push off a different leg every time. You have to train this leg that's been back the whole time and catching to now pushing."

AP

Muhammad Ali, right, launches an attack on Joe Bugner, British and European heavyweight champion, during their 12 round heavyweight fight in Las Vegas on Feb. 14, 1973.

Muhammad Ali's family reflects on the champion boxer's legacy 10 years after his 2016 death

By DYLAN LOVAN
Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Muhammad Ali's legacy extends beyond his stinging right jab, world titles and Olympic gold medal, to the heart and compassion he showed long after he left the ring, his wife Lonnie Ali said.

"He transcended boxing into every space you can imagine," she told The Associated Press this week ahead of the 10-year anniversary of Ali's death on June 3, 2016, after a long battle with Parkinson's disease.

"Muhammad lived by this mantra: service to others is the rent we pay for our room here on earth," Lonnie Ali said during an interview at The Muhammad Ali Center in Louisville, Kentucky. "He showed up every day with kindness and empathy in his heart for people who are in need."

Ali, known as the "Louisville Lip" in his hometown, rose to prominence as a trash-talking world champion boxer in the 1960s and began speaking about civil rights issues as his star was rising. He is widely regarded as the most famous and influential boxer of all time, winning the heavyweight title three times.

The Ali Center is sponsoring a "Day of Compassion" on Wednesday, the 10th anniversary of his death, to promote acts of service and caring. Lonnie Ali, who serves as the center's lifetime director, said the hope is an expanding annual event to highlight works of service and volunteering.

The day will focus on one of "the core values that made up Muhammad Ali" in an increasingly divided country, she said.

"Today, we are in a place where we are losing touch with our humanity and with each other," she said. "It's causing rifts, not just in families and communities, but in this nation. We're becoming increasingly polarized and separated, and sort of retreating to people who think like us, look like us, and not really reaching out."

She also challenged political leaders to lead with compassion, noting the recent weakening of the 1965 Voting Rights Act by the Supreme Court.

"We should always be thinking about how we can uplift a community, not how we can make it harder for them," Lonnie Ali said. "We want equal representation in this country. You can't have equal representation when you're denying people voting rights, you can't do that."

But there is hope, she said, and she saw that when the city of Louisville came together for a weeklong celebration of Ali's life in 2016. The week was capped by a funeral procession through the city and past her late husband's modest childhood home near downtown Louisville. Former President Bill Clinton and actor Billy Crystal spoke at his funeral, and Will Smith, who portrayed Ali in a 2001 movie, was a pallbearer.

The outpouring of love for Ali at his hometown funeral service was livestreamed to millions around the world. A decade later, Ali's face graced a U.S. Postal Service stamp for the first time, showing his enduring influence.

"We're talking about people who traveled thousands of miles to come here, who had never met the man, never laid eyes on him personally, but wanted to ... give their last respects to him: kings, princes, presidents, heads of state, celebrities, sports figures," Lonnie Ali said.

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Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement. Notice is given under section 49c of the State Housing Development Authority Act of 1966, 1966 PA 346, MCL 125.1449c, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on July 08, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE: Mortgagor(s): Bethany Emborsky, unmarried woman Original Mortgagee: Guaranteed Rate, Inc. Date of mortgage: March 17, 2025 Recorded on March 25, 2025, Liber 1258, on Page 330, Foreclosing Assignee (if any): Michigan State Housing Development Authority Amount claimed to be due at the date hereof: One Hundred Twenty-Nine Thousand Seven Hundred Ninety-Three and 70/100 Dollars ($129,793.70) Mortgaged premises: Situated in Cass County, and described as: Lots 89 and 90, Andrew Lester Addition to the City of Dowagiac, according to the plat thereof recorded in Liber 1 of Plats, page 53, Cass County Records. Commonly known as 116 Sherwood St, Dowagiac, MI 49047 The redemption period will be 6 month from the date of such sale, unless abandoned under MCL 125.1449v, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days from the MCL 125.1449v(b) notice, whichever is later; or unless extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Michigan State Housing Development Authority Mortgagee/Assignee Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. 23938 Research Dr, Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 248.539.7400 1595323 (06-06)(06-27)

Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM on JUNE 17, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information.
Default has been made in the conditions of a mortgage made by Amanda J. Martin, a married woman, to Greenpoint Credit Corp., Mortgagee, dated May 5, 1999 and recorded May 12, 1999 in Liber 700, Page 79 and Loan Modification Agreement recorded on October 25, 2021, in Liber 1206, Page 514, and Affidavit of Scrivener's Error recorded on September 22, 2020, in Liber 1180, Page 1804, Cass County Records, Michigan. Said mortgage is now held by U.S. Bank National Association, not in its individual capacity but solely as Trustee of the NRZ Pass-Through Trust XI, by assignment. There is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of Ninety-One Thousand Nine Hundred Thirteen and 0/100 Dollars ($91,913.00).
Under the power of sale contained in said mortgage and the statute in such case made and provided, notice is hereby given that said mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at public venue at the place of holding the circuit court within Cass County, Michigan at 10:00 AM on JUNE 17, 2026.
Said premises are located in the Township of Jefferson, Cass County Michigan, and are described as:
That part of the Southwest Quarter of Section 17, Township 7 South, Range 15 West, Jefferson Township, Cass County, Michigan, described as: Beginning at a point on the South line of said Section 17 a distance of 250.00 feet East of the Southwest corner of said Section 17; thence North 360.00 feet; thence East 250.00 feet; thence South 360.00 feet to the South line of said Section 17; thence West on said South line 250.00 feet to the point of beginning.
26890 Jefferson Center Rd, Cassopolis, Michigan 49031
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA §600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale.
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damage to the property during the redemption period. FinCEN reporting will be required of all successful purchasers, absent a lawful exemption.
Dated: May 16, 2026
File No. 26-003877
Firm Name: Orlans Law Group PLLC
Firm Address: 1650 West Big Beaver Road, Troy MI 48084
Firm Phone Number: (248) 502.1400 (05-16)(06-06)

NOTICE OF FORECLOSURE BY ADVERTISEMENT Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following Mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 a.m., on June 24, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. THIS FIRM IS A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT, ANY INFORMATION WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. PLEASE CONTACT OUR OFFICE AT THE NUMBER BELOW IF YOU ARE IN ACTIVE MILITARY DUTY. Default has occurred in the conditions of a Mortgage (the "Mortgage") made by DEVON RICHARDS and PAOLA LIZARDI RICHARDS, husband and wife, as Mortgagor(s), to United Federal Credit Union, as Mortgagee. The Mortgage is dated April 17, 2023 and was recorded April 24, 2023 at Liber 1231, Page 1567 of Cass County Records. The amount claimed to be due on said Mortgage and unpaid at the date of this Notice is ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-TWO THOUSAND NINETY AND 67/100 ($152,090.67) DOLLARS, including interest on the applicable indebtedness at a variable rate which is currently 7.25% per annum. This sum will increase as additional interest, costs, expenses, and attorney fees accrue under the Mortgage and its related note and which are permitted under Michigan law after the date of this Notice. No legal or equitable proceedings have been instituted to recover the debt secured by the Mortgage, and the power of sale in the Mortgage has become operative by reason of the default. At the date and time as referenced previously in this Notice, the Mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the property herein described, or some part of them, at public auction, to the highest bidder, for the purpose of satisfying the amount due and unpaid on the Mortgage, along with interest due, the legal costs and charges of sale as allowed by statute and/or the Mortgage, and any taxes and insurance that the Mortgagee pays on or prior to the date of said sale. The property mentioned and described in the Mortgage, as located in the Township of Mason, County of Cass, and State of Michigan, are more particularly described as follows: Part of the East half of the Northwest fractional quarter of Section 24, Town 8 South, Range 14 West, Mason Township, Cass County, Michigan, described as: From the North quarter of said Section 24, measure West, along the North line of said Section, 100.00; thence measure South 0 degrees 32 minutes 36 seconds East, 380.00 feet; thence measure West, 560.00 feet; thence measure South 0 degrees 32 minutes 36 seconds East, 1694.97 feet to the point of beginning of the land herein described; thence South 0 degrees 32 minutes 36 seconds East, 300.00 feet to the Indiana-Michigan State Line; thence South 89 degrees 36 minutes 05 seconds West, along said State Line, 247.95 feet; thence North 0 degrees 34 minutes 34 seconds West, 300.00 feet; thence North 89 degrees 36 minutes 05 seconds East, 248.12 feet to the point of beginning; Address: 16780 State Line Rd., Union, MI 49130; Tax Parcel No.: 14-060-024-374-47; together with all existing or subsequently erected or affixed buildings, improvements, and fixtures; all easements, rights of way, streets, roads, alleys, and public places, privileges, and appurtenances, public or private, now or later used in connection with the premises; and all rights to make divisions of the land that are exempt from the platting requirements of all applicable land division or platting acts, as amended from time to time. Attention Purchasers: the foreclosing Mortgagee reserves the right to cancel the sale prior to sale or to rescind this sale at any time. In that event, your damages, if any, will be limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at the sale, plus interest. If the mortgaged property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention Homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. The length of the redemption period will be six (6) months from date of sale, unless the redemption period is shortened pursuant to MCL 600.3241a or MCL 600.3238, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of sale or as otherwise provided by statute. DATED: May 23, 2026 ANDREW W. BARNES (P70571) BUTZEL LONG P.C. ATTORNEYS FOR UNITED FEDERAL CREDIT UNION 317 Center Street, South Haven, MI 49090; 269-287-2010 (05-23)(06-13)

0150 GARAGE /ESTATE SALES

FULL HOUSE ESTATE SALE
2658 Center Ave.
Niles, Mi 49120 (Off Barron Lake Rd.)
June 12th, 13th & 14th
9AM - ?
Robert & Barbara Williams shared over 60 years of marriage, with their passing we must EMPTY their home.
Much vintage crystal. 2-1800's corner cabinets, 1950's Lane Cedar lined oak chest. Dining room table and chairs, book cases, end tables, T.V. stand, many more pieces of furniture.
Garage, wood shop tools & lawn items. Full kitchen- elec range, refrigerator, small appliances, dishes, pans, etc. Tables of knick knacks, glassware, wall decor, 1930's dolls, X-mas items. Family made afghans, bathroom and kitchen towels and **SO MUCH MORE!**
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0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN 43RD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT CASS COUNTY 2026

PUBLICATION AND NOTICE OF FRIEND OF THE COURT ANNUAL STATUTORY REVIEW

PUBLIC NOTICE ANNUAL REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE RECORD OF THE FRIEND OF THE COURT

Pursuant to Michigan law, the chief circuit judge annually reviews the performance record of the friend of the court. The review will be conducted on or about July 1,2026.
This review is limited by law to the following criteria: whether the friend of the court is guilty of misconduct, neglect of statutory duty, or failure to carry out the written orders of the court relative to a statutory duty; whether the purposes of the Friend of the Court Act are being met; and whether the duties of the friend of the court are being carried out in a manner that reflects the needs of the community. Members of the public may submit written comments to the chief judge relating to these criteria. Send your written comments, with your name and address, to Hon Carol M. Bealor at 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031.

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN PROBATE COURT Cass COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS Decedent's Estate

CASE NO. and JUDGE
2026-127-DE

Court address:
60296 M-62,
Cassopolis, MI 49031
Court phone no.
269-4454454

Estate of
Elizabeth Ann Clement, deceased
Date of birth: 11/15/1923

TO ALL CREDITORS: **

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Elizabeth Ann Clement died 02/28/2026. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Nora E. Moroz & Margaret A. Clement-Jacobsen co-personal representatives, or to both the probate court at 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 05/27/2026

Attorney: John R. Colip
Bar no. P25250
12 Longmeadow Village Drive, Suite 100
Niles, MI 49120
269-591-6915

Co-Personal Representative(s)
Nora E. Moroz
61166 Putnam Rd
Cassopolis, MI 49031
269-240-8481

Margaret A. Clement-Jacobsen
1965 W. Bertrand Rd
Niles, MI 49120
269-347-9715

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POKAGON TOWNSHIP HALL
30683 PEAVINE STREET, DOWAGIAC, MICHIGAN 49047
PHONE: 269.782.8756

LEGAL NOTICE REGARDING PETITION FOR REZONING

TO PROPERTY OWNER OR PARTY IN INTEREST:

A Petition has been made to this BOARD by the POKAGON TOWNSHIP BOARD requesting the following:

A Rezoning Request from Carol Gearhart and Sharon Henry to rezone 47 acres of Parcels 14-110-011-202-00 and 14-110-011-200-00 located at 57156 M-51 S, Dowagiac, MI from current zoning of R-1 low density to C-2 commercial to allow for business and retail development.

You are being contacted regarding this request inasmuch as you own and/or occupy parcels in the subject area.

On Tuesday, June 23, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. a PUBLIC HEARING will be held on this petition in the Pokagon Township Hall.

THIS NOTICE IS FOR THE PURPOSE OF GIVING YOU, AND EVERY OTHER NEIGHBOR-IN-INTEREST, AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS YOUR VIEWS IN SUPPORT OF OR IN OPPOSITION TO THIS PETITION.

You may appear on your own behalf, you may be assisted by an attorney, you may authorize others to represent you, or you may express your views in writing.

All written communications must be received prior to the date of hearing or be presented at the time of the hearing.

If you have any questions concerning this case or wish any further information, please call Township
Supervisor Linda Preston at 269.782.8756.

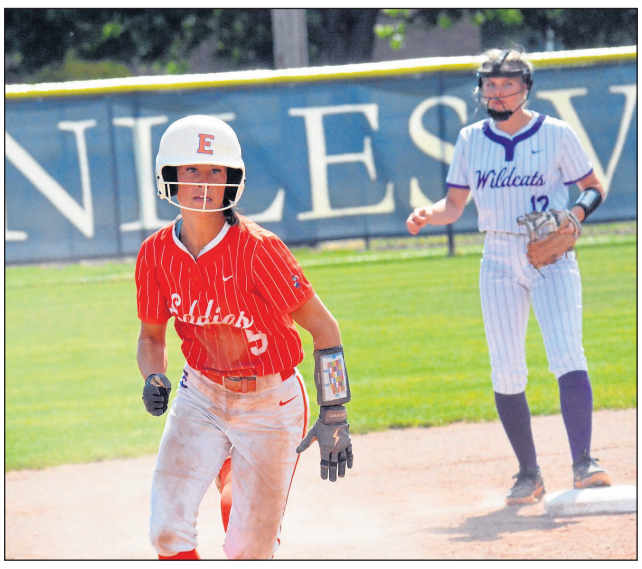
POKAGON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Mary Schrader, Secretary

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM on July 1, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE: Mortgagor(s): Mark Lewandowski, a Single Man Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for Rocket Mortgage, LLC, its successors and assigns Date of mortgage: September 30, 2024 Recorded on October 7, 2024, Book # 1251 on Page # 1850. Foreclosing Assignee: Rocket Mortgage, LLC. Amount claimed to be due at the date hereof: Two Hundred Forty-Seven Thousand Four Hundred Eighteen and 21/100 ($247,418.21) Mortgaged premises: Located in the Township of Milton, Cass County and described as: LOT NUMBERED 6 IN FRANTZ ACRES, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN LIBER 1-H OF PLATS, PAGE 385, CASS COUNTY RECORDS. Commonly known as 33546 Frantz Dr, Niles, MI 49120 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days from the MCL 600.3241a(b) notice, whichever is later; or unless extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of Act 236 of 1961 pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Please be advised that the trustee will require any entity or trust bidder at this trustee's sale to provide beneficial ownership information, documentation, and written certification as required under FinCEN's Anti-Money Laundering Regulations for Residential Real Estate Transfers, effective for transfers to covered transferees closing on or after March 1, 2026. This requirement applies where the purchaser is a legal entity (including an LLC, corporation, or partnership) or a trust, and the transfer is not financed by an institutional lender subject to existing anti-money laundering requirements. The required information and certification must be provided to the trustee prior to issuance of the trustee's deed upon sale. No trustee's deed will be issued for a covered transfer until all required FinCEN information has been received and certified. Additional information regarding these regulations and required transferee disclosures can be found at: https://www.fincen.gov/rre and https://www.fincen.gov/rre-faqs. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. ALAW 5404 Cypress Center Drive, Suite 300, Tampa, FL 33609 (813) 221-4743 26-002868 (05-30)(06-20)

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement. Notice is given under section 49c of the State Housing Development Authority Act of 1966, 1966 PA 346, MCL 125.1449c, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on June 17, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE: Mortgagor(s): Aliyah Baldwin Original Mortgagee: Contour Mortgage Corporation Date of mortgage: May 10, 2024 Recorded on May 16, 2024, Liber 1245, on Page 2496, Foreclosing Assignee (if any): Michigan State Housing Development Authority Amount claimed to be due at the date hereof: One Hundred Forty Thousand Twenty-Two and 34/100 Dollars ($140,022.34) Mortgaged premises: Situated in Cass County, and described as: Lots 59 and 60 in Lyle Addition to the City of Dowagiac, according to the plat thereof recorded in Liber 1 of plats, Page 58, Cass County Records. Commonly known as 106 Clyborn St, Dowagiac, MI 49047 The redemption period will be 6 month from the date of such sale, unless abandoned under MCL 125.1449v, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days from the MCL 125.1449v(b) notice, whichever is later; or unless extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Michigan State Housing Development Authority Mortgagee/Assignee Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. 23938 Research Dr, Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 248.539.7400 1593468 (05-16)(06-06)

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on June 17, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE: Mortgagor(s): Cassandra Miller and Jeffrey Starr Jr Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc.("MERS"),solely as nominee for lender and lender`s successors and assigns Date of mortgage: December 5, 2023 Recorded on December 11, 2023, Liber 1240, on Page 1243, Foreclosing Assignee (if any): NewRez LLC Amount claimed to be due at the date hereof: One Hundred Twenty Thousand Five Hundred Eighty-Five and 86/100 Dollars ($120,585.86) Mortgaged premises: Situated in Cass County, and described as: Lot 142 in McOmber`s Third Addition to the Village (now City) of Dowagiac, according to the plat thereof recorded in Liber W of Deeds, Page 330, Cass County Records. Commonly known as 421 W Railroad St, Dowagiac, MI 49047 The redemption period will be 6 month from the date of such sale, unless abandoned under MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period will be 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days from the MCL 600.3241a(b) notice, whichever is later; or unless extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. If the above referenced property is sold at a foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of Act 236 of 1961, under MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. NewRez LLC Mortgagee/Assignee Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. 23938 Research Dr, Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 248.539.7400 1593464 (05-16)(06-06)

SILVER CREEK TOWNSHIP ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS VARIANCE REQUEST, PUBLIC HEARING AND MEETING NOTICE
TO: THE RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS OF THE TOWNSHIP OF SILVER CREEK, CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN, AND ANY OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS:
PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Silver Creek Township Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing and meeting on Tuesday, June 23, 2026, commencing at 7:00 p.m. at the Silver Creek Township Hall, 32764 Dixon Street, Dowagiac, MI 49047, within the Township.
PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the item(s) to be considered at said meeting are as follows:
The request of Christopher Minnick regarding the property at 31892 Huckleberry Lane, Dowagiac, MI (Parcel No 14-130-325-051-00) which is located in the "WD" Waterfront District Zoning Classification, for variances in order to permit the applicant to retain a 28' x 40' (1120 square-foot) garage located on the northwest corner of the property near Huckleberry Lane. The parcel consists of three adjoining platted lots (51-53 Sandy Beach Estates) with a total according to the survey of 180 feet of frontage on Huckleberry and 181 feet of frontage on the Dewey Lake Channel and is .43 acres in area without a principal use.
· A one-story (up to 16 foot) variance from the from the maximum 10-foot sidewall height for an accessory building constructed on a property of less than 1 acre, in order to retain the second story of the garage (Zoning Ordinance Section 155.030 (B)(8)); and
· Retain an accessory building on a property without a primary residence application on the same parcel (Zoning Ordinance Section 155.030(A)(6).
Standards of review for consideration by the Zoning Board of Appeals are located in Section 155.253 of the Zoning Ordinance.
The Zoning Board of Appeals may also consider such other and further matters as may properly come before the Board at the meeting.
Anyone interested in reviewing the application for the above or the Township Zoning Ordinance may examine a copy of the same at the Silver Creek Township Hall during regular business hours of regular business days hereafter until noon on the date of the hearing and may further examine the same at said public hearing/meeting. The Township Zoning Ordinance is also accessible via internet at www.silvercreektwpmi.gov.
Written comments will be received from any interested persons concerning the foregoing by the Silver Creek Township Clerk at the Township Hall at any time during regular business hours up to the date of the hearing and may be further received by the Zoning Board of Appeals at the hearing.
All interested persons are invited to be present at the aforesaid time and place.
Silver Creek Township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audio tapes of printed material being considered at the hearing, to individuals with disabilities at the hearing upon four (4) days' notice to the Silver Creek Township Clerk. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the Silver Creek Township Clerk at the address or telephone number listed below.
SILVER CREEK TOWNSHIP ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
By: Jess Honn, Township Clerk
32764 Dixon St., Dowagiac, MI 49047
(269) 424-3025 www.silvercreektwpmi.gov



Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Edwardsburg fell to Three Rivers 2-0 in D2 district semifinal play at Niles High School.

Edwardsburg falls to Three Rivers 2-0 in district semifinals

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — Edwardsburg's softball season came to an end May 30 in a 2-0 loss to Three Rivers in Division 2 district semifinal play at Niles High School.

"They fought hard," said Edwardsburg coach Ali Kozinski. "This team beat us twice already this season, and so I'm really proud of the fight they put in, and it was a pitchers' battle. Disappointing our bats couldn't come alive."

The game was scoreless through six innings as Three Rivers pitcher Gia Newbury and Edwardsburg pitcher Kennidie Flanery dueled in the circle. The Wildcats scored both runs in the top of the seventh as Elizabeth Oestrike drove in Emmy Quake and Dani Glass drove in Oestrike with base hits.

"They just kept putting the ball in play and made our defense work and light a couple through, and we couldn't put the ball in play to let their defense work," Kozinski said. "That's the difference."

Autumn Schroeder, London Hoffmaster, Ashlynn Barnes, Mia Thomas, Madison Carr, Quake and Glass each had one hit. Olivia Jamison, Kyla Heflin and Victoria Pulling tallied hits for Edwardsburg

Newburry allowed three hits and struck out six for Three Rivers. Flannery struck out three Wildcats and allowed seven hits and two runs.

"[Flanery] gave a great effort," Kozinski said. "She's a senior, she pitched her heart out. She really wanted that one. I'm really proud of her, so she was our stud this year."

While the desired outcome was not reached, Kozinski is proud of her team and the way they battled throughout the season.

"They just want it," she said. "They fight hard, and they work hard in practice because they just want to win and they want to do good and they are a great team. They mesh really well. They were a lot of fun."

THREE RIVERS 2, EDWARDSBURG 0

Three Rivers	**000**	**000**	**2**	**—**	**2**	**7**	**0**
Edwardsburg	**000**	**000**	**0**	**—**	**0**	**3**	**2**

WP – G. Newburry 6k. LP – K. Flanery 3k.
Top hitters – Three Rivers: D. Glass 1b, RBI; A. Schroeder 1b; L. Hoffmaster 1b; A. Barnes 1b; M. Thomas 1b; E. Quake 1b; M. Carr 1b. Edwardsburg: O. Jamison 1b; K. Heflin 1b; T. Pulling 1b.

Dowagiac loses 1-0 to Three Rivers

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

COMSTOCK — The Dowagiac girls soccer team's historic season came to an end Friday night.

The Chieftains fell 1-0 to Three Rivers in the Division 3 district championship game. Three Rivers will advance to face Grand Rapids West Catholic Tuesday in the regional semifinals in Grand Rapids.

"Tonight, I was extremely proud of them," said Dowagiac coach Joe Pasternak. "For 80 full minutes, it was non-stop hustle. We did everything right, except put one in the back of the net. That's just the way it goes sometimes. You do every single thing right except the finish part. So, I'm extremely proud of them and the effort they've put in, and not just tonight but all season long."

With the game tied 0-0 with just under 21 minutes left, Three Rivers' Natalie McGahan beat goalkeeper Chloe Friske for the game-clinching goal. Moments later, Johannah McDonald and the Chieftains (13-2-3)had a potential game-tying goal overturned due to an offside call.

"Our forward just didn't get back in time and that went right to her," Pasternak said. "I didn't see the offside, so I didn't know for sure, but I trust what happened. Like I said, it was just one other thing that didn't go our way."

The Chieftains, who were in control for most of the game, generated several shots on goal but were not able to connect.

"I don't think [Three Rivers] did anything different. They are just a very competitive, fresh, and aggressive team," Pasternak said. "That causes a lot of problems for any team. When teams hustle, it makes things difficult and makes you have to do things faster than what you're used to. There's no way to really prepare in practice for intensity like a district championship game and that speed. Credit to them, they were able to finish their opportunity. I thought we controlled the majority of the game, we just couldn't finish."

The Chieftains will return the majority of this year's team but gone will be four-year starters Alivia Bell and Johannah McDonald. McDonald rewrote the school record book several times during her time with the program, including records for career goals and goals in a season, boys or girls.

"She has been a staple of what we want out of our program," Pasternak said of McDonald. "When I took over, things were a lot different, and she was bought in 100 percent to the extra effort, the off-season workouts, everything. As great of a player as she is, I think her work ethic has made it so much better for her. It's not just natural talent. There was a lot of hard work and dedication, and she really is an example of what we want in our program moving forward."

While the outcome is not what he wanted, Pasternak was proud of his team's accomplishments this season, which included winning the first conference championship in program history.

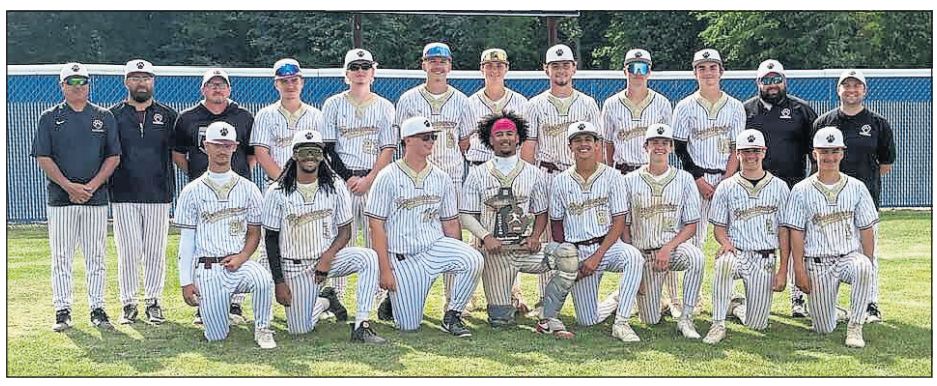
"The conference championship was awesome," he said. "They've accomplished so much. The junior class right now, their freshman year was not a very good year, and just to see how much we have built together as a group. It was a special group bringing everybody back from last year, and it's still a special group. We're losing key players, but we're only losing two, so everybody's coming back. I'm excited for this group for next year. It was a lot of fun.

"Apart from the winning, it's just a great group of girls that work hard and have fun at the same time. So I'm super proud of them."

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Dowagiac fell 1-0 to Three Rivers Friday in the Division 3 district championship game at Comstock High School.

BRANDYWINE BASEBALL WINS DISTRICT TITLE



The Brandywine baseball team defeated rival Buchanan 3-2 in Division 3 district title game May 30 at River Valley High School. Brandywine defeated Bridgman 3-0 in the semifinal and Buchanan shut down Cassopolis 18-0.

Photo provided

NILES BASEBALL WINS DISTRICT TITLE

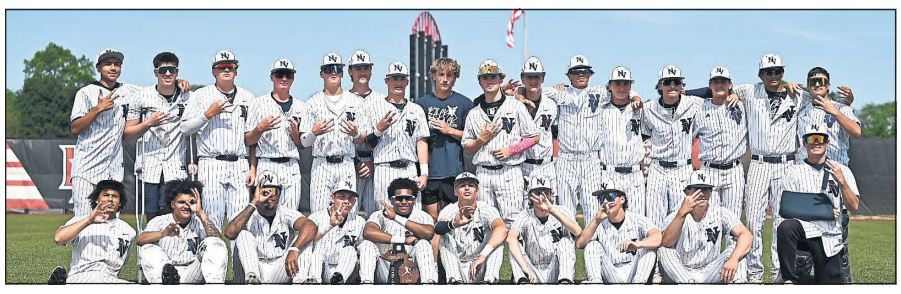


Photo courtesy of Tanya Hagen

The Niles baseball team beat host Lakeshore 9-1 in the Division 2 district championship May 30 for its third straight title. The Vikings beat Berrien Springs 3-2 in the semifinal and Lakeshore defeated Dowagiac 10-0.

Local athletes place at state finals

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

Local athletes turned in strong performances at the Division 2 state finals at Hamilton.

Ethan Nearpass placed third in the 100-meter adaptive (24.33) and second in the 200 adaptive (45.26) to medal.

2025 state champion high jumper Zach Overmyer placed second this year with a leap of 6-6 while teammates Ethan Haas (6-3) and Landon Boomershire (6-3) placed fourth and ninth respectively.

Edwardsburg's Sarina Mora placed third in long jump with 17-9.75 and Niles freshman Alani Scott narrowly missed the top 8 with ninth place finishes in both the 100-meter dash (12.58) and 400-meter dash (59.59).

At the Division 3 finals at Kent City, Cassopolis' Jaylen Pratt placed eighth in high jump (6-3) and Brandywine's Lily Gill placed sixth in the 100-metter hurdles (15.52) and Zaya Price sixth in high jump (5-1).

DIVISION 2 TRACK FINALS

At Hamilton
Boys

400 – 9. Mobius Stubblefield (E) 49.77; 800 – 10. Ethan Ferguson (E) 1:58.45; 100 adaptive – 3. Ethan Nearpass (D) 24.33; 200 adaptive – 2. Ethan Nearpass (D) 45.26; 1600 relay – 9. Edwardsburg (Mobius Stubblefield, George Scupham, Jack Bell, Will Johnson) 3:26.75; high jump – 2. Zachary Overmyer (E) 6-6; 4. (tie) Ethan Haas (E) 6-3; 9. Landon Boomershine (EDW) 6-3.

Girls

100 – 9. Alani Scott (N) 12.58; 400 – 9. Alani Scott (N) 59.59; long jump – 3. Sarina Mora (EDW) 17-9.75.

DIVISION 3 TRACK FINALS

At Kent City
Boys

high jump – 8. Jaylen Pratt (C) 6-3; 9. Elijhia Burt (BRW) 6-3.

Girls

high jump – 6. Zaya Price (BRW) 5-1; 100 hurdles – 6. Lily Gill (BRW) 15.52; 300 hurdles – 10. Lily Gill (BRW) 47.81.

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